Ideology and Social Protests in Eastern Europe

This book argues that the recent political mobilizations in Eastern Europe have been underpinned by a class struggle between a more conservative and a more radical line of contention. The latter line, the book contends, is designed by and for subaltern groups whose anti-systemic programme calls for not just the eradication of corruption, but for more participatory forms of democracy, for social justice, and for freedom from want. The former, on the other hand, is designed by powerful groups of intellectuals, for the middle classes whom the intellectuals see as the historical strata capable of advancing the 'catch-up' projects of modernisation and Europeanisation which they zealously champion. Based on a critical examination of recent political struggles, including a detailed case study of the 2013 protests in Bulgaria which focuses particularly on their internal antagonisms and drawing on the social theories of Antonio Gramsci and Ernst Bloch, the book provides shrewd insights into class antagonisms in political mobilizations, the distortive nature of ideological constructions and utopian longings, and the factors which propel many people to support projects for social change.

Veronika Stoyanova is an Associate Lecturer at the University of Kent in Canterbury, UK. She holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of Kent and a Master's degree in Social and Public Communication from the London School of Economics. Stoyanova's doctoral research focused on Bulgaria's recent waves of protest mobilisation in the context of the country's post-socialist 'transition' to liberal democracy and market economy. More broadly, her research interests are in theories of ideology and utopia, post-socialist studies, and also critical approaches to racism and marginalisation.

Contents

Acknowledgements

1 Introduction

Studying popular mobilisation in the post-socialist context

Day after day, year after year – we killed a quarter of a century. In a ship of dreams.
If you ask me, even if we were rowers in a galley – we'd have long reached a better
strand.

Anonymous comment in an online news site

Time and again through history popular social mobilisations occur, often as sudden
outbursts of anger that disrupt 'normal' politics. These are periods when relations
of power and domination get contested and often reworked. Sometimes previously
dominated social groups succeed in securing important strongholds within the
existing power structure, and sometimes even manage to uproot it, creating the
possibility for a new power configuration to emerge. Such a strong gust of anger,
as well as hope, that aims to upset the established social order, has undoubtedly
gripped much of Europe – East and West (and the world at large) – in recent years.
Although there are significant differences between recent popular protests in
'established', old democracies, and those in Central and Eastern Europe, they bear
one significant common characteristic – they appear to challenge what has come
to be known as the 'liberal consensus' established after the dissolution of the post-
World War II bipolar global power configuration. This contentious wave has been
developing for at least the past ten years or so in Central and Eastern Europe, where
numerous collective mobilizations challenging the liberal-technocratic elites of the
'transition' to liberal capitalism have been taking place since at least the second
half of the 2000s, and most significantly since the beginning of the current decade.
Some noteworthy examples include Hungary, which saw some of its first mass
demonstrations of this sort back in 2006, followed by a cycle of mass protests that
started in 2012 and continues intermittently to date; the Czech Republic, which
witnessed mass mobilisations in 2012; Slovakia, also in 2012, and Slovenia in
2012 2013; Romania, which experienced particularly strong mobilisational cycles
in 2012, 2014, 2015, as well as in 2017; and Bulgaria, which was shaken by two
waves of popular protest in 2013. Mass protests also took place in Bosnia and
Herzegovina in 2014, and in Macedonia in 2015, 2016, and 2017.

Most often during popular mobilisations such as these, the aired collective long-
ings for an alternative present get suppressed or die out under the weight of the

efforts to sustain existing relations of oppression by the powers that be. Yet such suppression does not need to be direct, physical, and tangible. The concept of ideology has been used to capture those mechanisms of domination which use ideas, belief systems, meanings and values to *generate consent*, rather than to coerce one into accepting these as right. What is more, in liberal-capitalist democracies the sources of ideas that function to produce consent for the reproduction of oppressive structures are not necessarily self-evident, and sometimes even self-aware. This book will argue that recent struggles to uproot existing relations of domination in the established post-1989 liberal-capitalist order across the post-socialist region appear to be hindered by such an operation of ideological 'distortions', which seep through the lines of protesters, but whose source is not always the power-holding elites who are being challenged, but instead parts of the protesting groups themselves. These distortions – which occur in the language and behaviour of protesters – seem to forge, or rather magnify existing economic, political and social cleavages between different groups struggling for social change. What seems to emerge is the operation of a peculiar dynamic of hierarchisation of civil voices which ranks more and less powerful communicators on the terrain of civil society.

This book attempts to unravel such fault lines emerging between protesting groups and the resultant production, re-negotiation and effects of such power struggles. To do this, I carry out a close examination of protest discourses. The main case study the book draws on comes from Bulgaria where two waves of mass protest took place in 2013: first in February to March 2013, and second from June 2013 to July 2014 (from now on, the 'Winter' and the 'Summer' protests). These were the most widespread protest mobilizations in the country since 1990 and should be seen as part of the wider pattern of civic insurgencies globally and in the East European region. The book further draws on several other protest mobilisations of recent years in the region – primarily those in Romania, as well as those in Hungary and Macedonia – establishing similarities and differences between them in an attempt to better understand the conditions for and consequences of the specific power relations we witness unfolding today in the post-socialist region, but also beyond. In the following discussion, I shall first take the reader through the empirical and theoretical considerations which informed the specific theoretical model for studying popular mobilisations proposed in this book. The full theoretical framework is then elaborated in more detail in Chapter Three and applied to protests' discourses in the rest of the book.

Studying popular mobilisation in the post-socialist context

This book is based on a research project whose initial point of interest was the elusive concept of 'civil society' in the post-socialist context. Drawing on analyses such as Marc Howard's (2003) *The Weakness of Civil Society in Post-Communist Europe*, I rather naively set to ask why postcommunist civil society is 'weak'. It took the first year of the research study to fully realise the dangers inherent to sticking to received scholarly (as well as everyday life) pre-constructions, which are often politically charged, since, as Gramsci (1971)

reminds us, "science [is] itself political activity". Once I began to take a critical distance from the social scientific, as well as lay, constructions of 'civil society', I was in a better position to carry out what Bachelard (1986) called an "epistemic rupture" – a bracketing out of pre-constructions and thus a temporary break with the common sense conceptions (*doxa*) and with the received scientific conceptions (*episteme*),[1] which structured the lay and the scientific discourses on what was known as 'civil society' in the post-socialist context. In other words, it was particularly important to recognise that 'civil society' is a theoretical concept not only since it is unobservable as such, but also inasmuch as it describes a social phenomenon that is concept-dependent – social actors' (including social scientists') conceptions of it are not external to the social facts it describes but produce part of the reality of those facts. This entails then that to talk about 'civil society' necessarily involves entering "particular language-games which license some theoretical moves and not others" (Outhwaite 1998: 284). A key way in which we can avert the dangers of scientific and lay pre-constructions when our object of inquiry is heavily concept-dependent (as is 'civil society') is via tracing the history of the social work of construction of these objects. The research process informing this book began with such a temporary and partial rupture with the doxic in order to construct the object of post-socialist civil society as a scientific object of analysis; following that, the doxic experience of the world was necessarily re-integrated back into the analysis – now 'redescribed' in a way that brings out its complexity as a social phenomenon determined by a multiplicity of interacting tendencies (ibid.). That is, it was after an attempt to acquire the necessary distance from the structures of political and academic discourse on post-socialist civil society, which often functioned as instruments of (symbolic) power, that I could then be able to re-insert and re-describe these social pre-constructions now as *objectivated* categories whose 'function' and causal powers needed to be understood in terms of their own reality-producing potential.

At the same time as I was indulging in such reflexive work on the object of research inquiry, it was becoming more and more apparent that Marc Howard's diagnosis of Central and East Europe's civil societies needed reassessment – news about mass popular mobilisations in Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia and other countries in the region had been rolling in at increasing levels since at least 2011. Among these, two mass waves of protests which took place in Bulgaria in 2013 became my main point of entry into the social reality of post-socialism I was interested in. Central to the discursive practices of the social agents of these and many other protests in the region was namely the notion of 'civil society', whose meaning, function and carriers (or 'representatives' in the idiom of the protesters) were subject to fierce contestation between different collectivities. The difficult task of constructing the research object for my study was then eased by an opportunity to extract, or isolate, the object of inquiry and its main elements, out of the events of Bulgaria's 2013 protests, which I then further contextualised – drawing comparisons and contrasts – with several other mass protest events in the region. It is then mainly through an intensive analysis of a 'fragment of the object' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 232) – the discourses on civil society during the 2013

Bulgarian protests – that I sought to achieve an understanding of a broader object of inquiry – that is, the dynamics of post-socialist power relations.

Most studies of political collective mobilisations tend to focus on the struggle between challengers (groups who recognise themselves as oppressed in one way or another) and challenged (political and/or economic power elites who are identified as oppressors in one form or another). The principle focus of this book instead falls on what has been transpiring as strife *between* different protesting social groups in recent protests. The two Bulgarian waves of mobilisation in 2013 appeared in many ways different – they seemed to mobilise distinct social groups and often made divergent and even conflicting demands of power-holders. Importantly, at the same time as both contending a wide circle of political and economic elites, the two waves engaged in a contentious struggle with each other. This struggle entailed a host of disagreements, such as who the enemy is, how they should be fought, and particularly who shall fight them; neither did they agree on the definitions of prevailing social problems or on the best solutions to those. In short, all protesting groups agreed that social and political change was desired, but they disagreed over whose vision for change constituted the right way forward. While such political polarisation is far from unusual in any large-scale collective political mobilisation, the divisions among 2013's protesting groups seem to merit special attention, since they appear to reflect fundamental social cleavages which had been building up for some time prior to 2013. Rather than a mere altercation between different political factions, these disagreements were over the nature of democracy and the new political and social order.

Similarly, other protests in the region – including, for example, Romania's anti-neoliberal protests of 2012 and anti-corruption protests of 2015 and 2017, as well as the anti-governmental protests in Macedonia in 2015 – appear to exhibit very similar dynamics of intra-protest contestation. For example, almost all of these mobilisations were reacted upon by pro-governmental rallies (often known as 'counter-protests') that supported the social change projects of the respective governments in power. This book argues, however, that we should not mistake these 'counter-protests' as attempting to prevent socio-political change and/or as being necessarily conservative in nature. I'd like to put forward the thesis that the rise of what have been called 'anti-establishment' (Barr 2009; Hanley and Sikk 2013) or 'populist' parties in the region over the past decade or so have now given way to a political conjecture that sees protest action as (at least rhetorically) incorporated into party politics – so that even pro-governmental protest mobilisation should, this book will argue, still be seen as part of political contestation of power. In other words, particular political beliefs and convictions notwithstanding, the motivation and goals of people joining a demonstration in support of a government which has come into power on a platform filled with revolutionary rhetoric could not, and should not, be thought of as gripped by conservative sensibilities and passivity – a claim which, as I will show later, has often constituted a key feature of both academic and political criticism levelled at these groups.

The principle question this book aims to answer then is what this rift among protesters can tell us about the dynamics of power struggles in the post-socialist region

a quarter of a century after 1989. I am here particularly interested in the ideological articulations which pit some social groups who desired social change against others who *also* mobilised for change. In other words, the crux of the problem, and the focus of attention here, is not (just) one of groups attempting counter-hegemonic struggle against conservative groups grappling to preserve the status quo and their own privileged position therein. Rather, this book's principle focus is on the clash between social groups, all of which seemed committed to programmes for social change; the emphasis then falls on their internal unequal relations of power. In this, the book exposes and criticises the particular ways in which these groups' longings for an alternative present (and future) have frequently been co-opted and converted instead into tools for the reproduction of the social order.

Overall, this book aims to contribute to two main sets of literature: on ideology and political struggle, and on post-socialist studies, by offering a stronger focus on human *agency* within the former, and attempting to extend the scope of the latter by offering a research focus on *class struggle* in the post-socialist context. Additionally, I aim to argue for the stronger inclusion of the post-socialist perspective into existing critical studies of ideology and political struggle (within critical theory, and particularly the radical Left literature). Chapters Three and Four discuss these in detail. More specifically, this book explores matters of power, ideology and counter-hegemony by focusing mostly on the Bulgarian context, as a particularly interesting case of a wider pattern of post-socialist political struggles. I investigate these concepts primarily on a macro level – focusing on the large-scale processes of social change underpinning both the historical context and the protest events, but at the same time attempting to unravel the patterns of individual and group interaction through analysing particular instances of 'discursive events' (Fairclough 1992: 8).

In disciplinary terms this book falls at the intersection between politics and political philosophy, sociology, and cultural studies, whereby the confluence occurs in terms of their interest in ideology and political struggles for social change. It is particularly inspired by the critical studies tradition of highlighting questions of power and discourse, and borrows important elements of the conceptual and theoretical frameworks developed within this tradition. More specifically, the book's theoretical framework engages with Antonio Gramsci's (1971) work on *hegemony*, Norman Fairclough's (1992, 2013) and Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's (1985) work on *discourse*, and Ernst Bloch's (1986, 1991) work on the intersection between *ideology and utopia*. The principle theoretical objective is to demonstrate through a critical discussion of the empirical and theoretical literature (Chapters Two and Three) and the discursive analysis offered (Chapters Four, Five and Six) that critical studies of political struggle in Eastern Europe and beyond, which currently draw heavily on structuralist and post-structuralist (postmodern) thought driven by the many 'linguistic turns', can be fruitfully complemented with 1) a stronger Marxist focus on the historical-materialist conditions (class) of political struggle and, at the same time, with 2) a stronger focus on human agency. I attempt both of these endeavours by offering a theoretical synthesis between a Gramscian political analysis of the reproduction of social order (through a focus

on both class and culture), coupled with a Blochian focus on agents' capacity for mobilisation for social change, driven by utopian longings. Furthermore, the critical studies of political struggle can benefit tremendously from a stronger East European (post-socialist) perspective, which offers empirical data on the workings of ideological struggle in the aftermath of large-scale social change, and can thus enrich our understanding of how power and ideology operate not only to *sustain* already existing relations of oppression, but also to *impose* and (re)negotiate new forms of relations of domination. Apart from offering such a theoretical and empirical contribution, this book further aims to provide a political intervention which aids critical studies' efforts to challenge the established dominance in the academic field of the 'expert' discourses on politics born out of the post-1989 end-of-history liberal consensus, which have been particularly strongly steering the questions and conceptual apparatuses of research conducted in the post-socialist region over the last two decades (discussed in detail in Chapter Two).

Since it is specifically the Bulgarian case study that provided the empirical point of entry into the social reality of post-socialist power struggles of interest in this book, here I sketch some of my empirical observations of the unfolding protests in 2013 and the respective theoretical considerations these invited – all of which ultimately informed the research this book grew out of.

The case of Bulgaria, 2013

Whilst observing the fast-developing political turbulence in Bulgaria over the course of 2013, it became clear that among the different protesting factions there were significant power imbalances when it came to the ability to speak and to be heard, but there were also intense struggles to assert or overcome these disparities. It is essentially these symbolic struggles that constituted the starting point, as well as the key focus, of the research project that informed this book. Some of my first observations of protesters' language and behaviour pointed to a need to pose both questions of *structural* constraints on their actions, but also questions of how social actors either challenged, re-negotiated, and overcame these, or re-produced and re-enforced them – questions which effectively pertain to the theoretical problematisation of human (or civic) *agency*. Social groups which previously had little or no real access to the public sphere seemed to attempt to claim their right of political voice, while other groups seemed intent on re-asserting their exclusive footing therein. The language of the clash which transpired thereupon seemed to reflect fundamental *classificatory struggles* between these groups: their claims were implicitly or explicitly based on moral, cultural, and class grounds through which they attempted to set themselves apart from other social groups. Hence a conceptual framework which was capable of capturing issues of *class* and *culture* emerged as imperative. To this end, the analysis presented in this book adopts a significant focus on culture and borrows Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) conception of classes as not reducible to the purely economic, but as containing a combination of economic and cultural capital. However, somewhat in contrast to Bourdieu's view of culture as mostly inhibiting class struggle,[2] I follow the Italian political theorist Antonio

Gramsci in his view of the cultural realm as a realm of class struggle where different social classes seek to present their interests as the interests of all. Thus, the case study presented in Chapters Five and Six asks how and why hierarchies of social class and power got symbolically (re-)negotiated and enacted during the 2013 struggles for social change against the background of the rapidly changing and unstable political environment of the Bulgarian post-socialist context. In answering this, I attend to both the material and symbolic constitution of these divisions; and specifically within the language of the 2013 protests, I pay heed to the power of naming, the symbolic violence and performative effects of classificatory and de-classificatory discursive and extra-discursive practices.

Importantly, central to the conceptual toolbox protesters in Bulgaria appeared to draw upon to make these claims was the notion of *civil society*: different factions of the protest claimed that they embodied and expressed the authentic voice of civil society. At the same time, the very dynamic of the contestation which was occurring between different social groups appeared to resemble the theoretical account of civil society that Antonio Gramsci (1971) developed at the beginning of the twentieth century: that is, as an arena of social (class) struggle between different groups (classes) vying for hegemony, or cultural domination, and state power. In this way, the importance of the notion of civil society emerges as twofold: first, drawing on the empirical observation of its usage by protesters, I take it as a key object of study, as a 'nodal point' in social agents' discourses; second, informed by existing theoretical knowledge, I proceed to adopt it as a key element of the theoretical framework of the study. In other words, civil society emerges here as simultaneously an object of enquiry and an analytical tool for analysis of protest dynamics. Consequently, a key question this book poses is how the recent political contestations, based on class and culture, attempt to discursively forge a new power configuration among different social groups on the terrain of civil society, and how the idea of civil society itself gets mobilised within these struggles. The theoretical discussion of class and culture mentioned earlier will then be weaved into a discussion of civil society in Chapter Three.

A further essential element of this book's conceptual framework which is again grounded in an empirical observation of the Bulgarian protests is the role of *intellectuals* in the protest dynamics of 2013 and of other popular mobilisations in CEE. As the analysis of the Bulgarian protests will demonstrate, key figures in the socio-political contestations of 2013 were public intellectuals. They seemed to possess extraordinary socio-symbolic power to influence discussions of moral ends, to define the terms of the distribution of status and prestige, and to (de)legitimise political action during both protest waves. What is more, the centrality of this group of social agents here goes beyond recent protests both on an empirical and theoretical level. They have played a decades-long key role in politics in Bulgaria, and in CEE generally (see Hristova 2005, 2011; Bozoki 1999; Eyal, Szelenyi and Townsley 2000), and have thus been of research interest for scholars of the region for some time. These empirical considerations are also in line with Gramsci's (1971) theorisation of civil society and the (re)production of hegemony: intellectuals, in his account, help provide legitimacy for the hegemonic project of the day,

and thus for the dominant social class advancing it. By organising the practical content of hegemony and manufacturing consent for it, intellectuals inscribe the dominant classes' interests into what Gramsci called the public's 'common sense'. The theoretical elaboration of the role of intellectuals, as part of the theorisation of civil society with its classificatory struggles played out therein, is also further discussed in Chapter Three.

Another empirical observation which informed this book's approach (including the research question it is based upon) is the centrality of historical references to the period of the so-called post-socialist 'transition' in the language of all protesters. Problematising the past two decades of 'transition to democracy and market economy' and the period before 1989 form a key part of the definitions and explanations protesters across the region attach to their present-day grievances. Importantly, different and often conflicting interpretations of the past clashed, further denting the emerging cleft between protesting groups. For the purposes of analysis, this necessitates a considerable emphasis throughout this book to be placed on the historical context, and informs two more key questions the study considers: what were the different ways the post-socialist 'transition' was narrated, re-assessed and evaluated by different protesting groups, and how did these inform, and play out in, the inter-class conflict which transpired in Bulgaria in 2013 and in the other protest mobilisations under scrutiny here? These questions will then consistently animate this book's analysis of protesters' discourses. Additionally, in Chapter Four, I offer a historical account of the development of the idea of civil society in Bulgaria since 1989. Such a historical detour will scrutinise the development and instrumentalisation of the notion of 'civil society' as part of the post-socialist 'transition', and will thus facilitate a better understanding of the concept's mobilisation by various social groups during the 2013 Bulgarian protests, as well as across other popular mobilisations in the region.

While the concept of the 'transition' (and the period it is used to refer to) is central to protesters' discourses (that is, to political speech), it also forms a particularly key part of the academic discourse of research studies of the region after 1989. In fact, the contemporary notion of 'transition' that exists in popular parlance and has consistently been mobilised for political purposes over the past twenty-plus years in the region, originates in Western academic (and political) efforts to make sense of, and design interventions in, the post-socialist trajectory of the region. Thus, the academic and the political utilisation of the concept need to be scrutinised *jointly*. I offer a brief sketch of the mutually reinforcing academic and political development of the concept of 'transition' in the 1990s and its ensuing contestation – both academic and political – in the 2000s, in the first part of Chapter Two. Such a rehearsal of the historico-contextual (academic and political) background of the concept of 'transition' then helps to set the scene for, and to facilitate a better understanding of, its contestation and re-negotiation by protesters today.

Along with problematising the past in an effort to explain today's problems, an important part of the language of protesters in Bulgaria's 2013 mobilisations was also deliberation on the *future*. That is, they sought solutions and formulated fixes to the social ills they identified, and this formed a key part of their

political argumentation. These again differed among protesting groups and formed yet another part of the fissure that divided protesters. Of course, the solutions social agents offer are inextricably linked to the definitions of current problems they collectively define as pertinent. To be able to conceptualise protesters' collective imagining and elaboration of alternative futures which disrupt the social order, I join the efforts of some critical theorists to revive the concept of *utopia*. Informed by the emphasis offered by the German philosopher Ernst Bloch (1986, 1991) on the 'functionality of the utopian impulse' and its role in struggles for social transformation, these scholars' work on utopia conceptualises the latter as intrinsically critical of present reality and also split along the same social cleavages that characterise social reality's conflictual relations (see Bauman 1976; Gardiner 1992; Geoghegan 1987, 2004; Levitas 1990, 2005, 2013; Thompson and Zizek 2013). Following them, in this book I see the antagonistic social and political forces in the protest mobilisations as expressing certain utopian formulations which aim to reopen the space of the possible and redefine the trajectory of the social world.

Overall, the main object of the study in this book will then be discourse. The protest events examined here are seen as 'discursive mega events': they figured on the discourse planes of politics and media intensely, extensively, and over a prolonged period of time (Jäger and Maier 2009: 48–49). Over the course of the protests, people (re-)produced, challenged, (re-)negotiated, and (re-)asserted meanings, signs, and values. I explore these through the lens of the concept of ideology, broadly defined in Terry Eagleton's (1991: 2) terms, as "the conjuncture of discourse and power". In articulating their grievances and demands, social actors drew on various discourses and such selections can be linked to their differential interests and social positions, highlighting such "radical entanglement between discourse and power" (Shapiro, Bonham and Heradstveit 1988: 398). It is through examining the protests' discourses then that this book seeks to ask how and why certain protest grievances and demands, certain descriptions of problems and projects for social change in the region have come to prevail over or be seen as more legitimate than others. Yet, my analysis of discursive practices will not involve analysing the latter as purely linguistic categories, but as categories that lie at the intersection between discourse and non-discourse, language and extra-linguistic social reality. Although my main object of analysis is discourse – social actors' representations, construals, conceptualisations and theories of events and practices – following the Critical Discourse Analysis paradigm developed by Norman Fairclough (1995, 2003), I recognise that these constitute a part of social reality and as such, have both a semiotic and a material character (Jessop 2004). Hence, the analysis offered in this book will be concerned with the relations between the material and the discursive – which, although not discrete and fully separate, are considered here different elements: they 'internalise', without being reducible to, each other.

A large body of secondary data in the form of historical, sociological and political research of the region further informs the discourse analysis of the context in which the contestations of and within post-socialist civil society occur. A historicist account is most significantly deployed in Chapter Four, which traces the

development of discourses of and around the notion of civil society since 1989, but it also animates the entire analysis of protest discourses in the rest of the book. Such a heavy focus on the historicity of the discourses of interest is necessary in order to expose the diachronicity of the heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1935) of protest discourses. It is important to show that these discourses "represent the co-existence of socioideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socioideological groups in the present" (Gardiner 1992: 291); in short, to show how discourses, social relations and identities are subject to diachronic change in the context of the post-socialist 'transitions' to liberal capitalism.

A different take on populism in CEE and beyond

The theoretical and conceptual framework I then develop to approach the analysis offered in this book is inspired by the theoretical work on ideology/hegemony and civil society elaborated by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, and by the theory of ideology and utopia advanced by the German Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch. This focus on the ideologico-utopian interweaving in struggles for social change aims to offer a critique of the current literature's dominant anti-populist interpretations of popular mobilisations in Eastern Europe (and beyond). Leading analysts and champions of liberal democracy have consistently lamented recent years' political turbulence, seeing it primarily as a period of 'democratic breakdown' in which new democratic states across the world, as well as in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), 'backslide' away from democracy. Especially alarming for many of them seem to be what Ivan Krastev has called "massive outburst of social fury" (2014: 6), which they see as a conduit for the rise of authoritarian populist parties. This recent protest dynamics throughout Europe has also often been summarised as the "erosion of the [post-1989] liberal consensus" (Smilov and Krastev 2008: 8), or, as the Journal of Democracy titled its January 2016 issue, "The Authoritarian Threat".

In this book, then, I advance a critique of such strong anti-populist interpretations of recent years' popular mobilisations, and propose an alternative route into understanding the latter. I specifically challenge the centrist/liberal alarmist understanding of populism, which can be seen as part of the wider offensive, both political and academic, of the post-democratic discourse against strong popular participation in political life. Instead, I propose to approach the recent political 'radicalisation' as a resurgence of democratic politics, rather than 'democratic rollback'. Such an approach aligns itself with many of the positions taken towards the popular mobilisations by radical democratic scholars on the political Left. Yet, I aim to both contribute to, and depart in some ways, from the latter's dominant takes on the problem. Very few of the radical democratic authors on the academic Left have addressed the political mobilisations in CEE, mostly focusing instead on the anti-austerity protests of Occupy Wall Street, progressive or neo-fascist movements in Greece, Spain's Indignados, and so on. This book aims to fill this gap – claiming there are important insights to be gained from popular mobilisations in the post-socialist regions too, including how recent decades' period

of intense social transformation influences class conflict and political struggle. I further take note of this literature's lack of an adequate focus on social (class) cleavages which surface during popular mobilisations (both in CEE and globally). Although scholars focusing on the postcommunist transitions (transitologists) have often recognised a distinction between what they call 'soft populists' (as well as 'anti-populist' [pro-reform]) protesters (Krastev 2013a, 2013b), on one hand, and 'hard populists', on the other, these analyses have consistently endorsed the former for their support of liberal capitalism, and derided the latter for their efforts to challenge the liberal social order. At the same time, with very few exceptions, the radical democratic perspectives on the Left have largely failed to address the heterogeneity of the popular mobilisations in CEE. Again, this is partly because the focus of their research attention in the last few years has fallen mostly on the anti-austerity mobilisations in the global West, and much less on the post-socialist region. When this literature has specifically attempted to counter the blanket manner in which the anti-populist affront to the liberal-centrist discourse has painted all populism as essentially bad for democracy, these scholars have mostly argued for a distinction between a progressive (legitimate) left-wing populism and a conservative (illegitimate) right-wing populism. Whilst it successfully challenges the transitological discourses' take on populism as all evil, this move to draw attention to populism's propensity to be either progressive *or* regressive (inclusionary *or* exclusionary, left-wing *or* right-wing) has its downsides. It too misses to recognise potential hybrid and contradicting articulations between left-wing and right-wing, progressive and conservative ideas within one and the same social group. This, I claim, is mostly due to their inability to explain how political articulation (of interests and identities) relates to a social actor's social (class) position.

This book then fills the gap that the radical democratic perspectives have left in accounting for the popular mobilisations in the post-socialist context of Eastern Europe. It offers a radical democratic perspective on the post-socialist context's complex ideological articulations that breaks the dominant pattern of focusing on either progressive anti-austerity, anti-neoliberal movements *or* conservative, nationalist mobilisations. In doing this, I attempt to overcome the difficulty of the task of separating the progressive from the conservative, the 'good' sense from the 'common' sense, the utopian impulse from the ideological fog. Following Ernst Bloch, I recognise that utopian longings are not necessarily wed to 'progressive' politics, since in the approach I advocate in this book, utopia and ideology are intertwined and no longer subject to the neat distinction Karl Mannheim (1936), for example, drew between the former as progressive and the latter as reactionary. This is also why, this book argues, it is important not to separate 'discourses' the way many radical democratic approaches have done by separating 'right-wing populism' from 'left-wing populism', as if these exist in a free-floating discursive space and are neatly articulated by specific groups (right-wing populists vs. left-wing populists) without the possibility for incoherent, internally contradicting, hybridisation within one and the same social groups' (and of course individual's) 'common sense'. Thus the specific class conditions and historical experiences (specifically of the post-1989 period in Bulgaria and CEE) of these individuals

and groups, as well as their imaginaries for alternative social orders and the hierarchies these envisage, play a particularly important role in the analysis offered in this book.

More broadly, this book offers insights which can be applied to the wider pattern of re-politicisation and popular mobilisations (including both street and voter mobilisations) across Europe and beyond. Recent political developments such as 2016's 'Brexit' and the election of Donald Trump in the United States, as well as the rise of other 'populist' political powers across Europe, signal the necessity to exert more focused and purposeful efforts to understand the recent upsurge of popular politics – efforts that go beyond the common approaches of blanketing these out as marginal and/or lumping all of them together as undistinguishable, uniform and homogenous phenomena. In effect, the theoretical synthesis I build between Bloch's work on utopia and Gramsci's work on hegemony should help us see more than 'lower class ignorance' in the results of Britain's EU referendum and in the popularity of Marine Le Pen in France, as well as more than 'middle class disillusionment with the failure of the postcommunist transition' in Bulgaria's and Eastern Europe's popular protests of recent years. In other words, the proposed approach to struggles for social change that takes into account the particular ideologico-utopian interlace in discourses can provide potentially immensely revealing insights into how and why certain groups' (often counter-progressive) struggles for social change become dominant and win not only consent but arid enthusiasm despite often not corresponding to these groups' (class) interests.

Notes

1 See Vandenberghe (1999: 41) and Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 235–236).
2 It can be argued that for Bourdieu (1998), there is mostly only classification struggle within distinct cultural fields, or within the dominant classes, but there is little to no (inter-)class struggle (i.e. *between* classes) (Burawoy 2012); to him, most often the dominated are in a state of "patterned inertia" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 13), "steeped in the stupor of domination, manipulated by their spokespeople" (Burawoy 2012: 8).

References

Bachelard, G. (1986). *The Formation of the Scientific Mind: A Contribution to a Psychoanalysis of Objective Knowledge*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Bakhtin, M. (1935). Discourse in the novel. In Hale, D. J., ed. (2006) *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900–2000*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 481–510.

Barr, R. R. (2009). Populists, outsiders and anti-establishment politics. *Party Politics*, 15(1), 29–48.

Bauman, Z. (1976). *Socialism: The Active Utopia*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

Bloch, E. (1986). *The Principle of Hope*. Trans. Plaice, N., Plaice, S. and Knight, P. Vol. 1. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Bloch, E. (1991). *Heritage of Our Times*. Trans. Plaice, N. and Plaice, S. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction*. Trans. Nice, R. London: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In Richardson, J., ed. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood, pp. 241–258.

Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. and Wacquant, L. J. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bozoki, A. (1999). *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe*. Budapest: Central European University Press.

Burawoy, M. (2012). Cultural domination: Gramsci meets Bourdieu. In Burawoy, M. and Von Holdt, K., eds. *Conversations with Pierre Bourdieu: The Johannesburg Moment* [Online].

Eagleton, T. (1991). *Ideology: An Introduction*. Vol. 9. London: Verso Books.

Eyal, G., Szelenyi, I. and Townsley, E. (2000). *Making Capitalism without Capitalists: The New Ruling Elites in Eastern Europe*. 2nd edn. London: Verso Books.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London and New York: Longman.

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge.

Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. 2nd edn. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Gardiner, M. (1992). Bakhtin's carnival: Utopia as critique. *Utopian Studies*, 3(2), 21–49.

Geoghegan, V. (1987). Marxism and utopianism. *Utopian Studies*, (1), 37–51.

Geoghegan, V. (2004). Ideology and utopia. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 9(2), 123–138.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Trans. Hoare, Q. and Smith, G. N., eds. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Hanley, S. L. and Sikk, A. (2013). Economy, corruption or promiscuous voters? Explaining the success of Anti-Establishment Reform Parties in Eastern Europe. *ECPR General Conference, Bordeaux, 5–7 September 2013* [Online].

Howard, M. (2003). *The Weakness of Civil Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hristova, N. (2005). *The Specifics of the Bulgarian 'Dissidence': Power and Intelligentsia 1956–1989 [Spetsifika na Bulgarskoto 'Disidentstvo'. Vlast i Intelligentsiya 1956–1989]*. Sofia: Letera.

Hristova, N. (2011). Ot maskite do maskarada. Bulgarskite intelektualci v godinite na prehoda: sotsialna pamet za 'vchera', sotsialni roli za 'dnes'. In *Izsledvania po istoria na socializma v Bulgaria: Prehodut*. Sofia: Tsentar za istoricheski i politologicheski izsledvaniya, pp. 522–541.

Jäger, S. and Maier, F. (2009). Theoretical and methodological aspects of Foucauldian critical discourse analysis and dispositive analysis. In Wodak, R. and Meyer, M., eds. *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage, pp. 34–61.

Jessop, B. (2004). Critical semiotic analysis and cultural political economy. *Critical Discourse Studies*, 1–2, 159–174.

Krastev, I. (2013a). Bulgaria's revolt against consensus. *Project-Syndicate* [Online], 13 March.

Krastev, I. (2013b). *In Mistrust We Trust: Can Democracy Survive When We Don't Trust Our Leaders?* [Kindle]. Monterey: TED Conferences Press.

Krastev, I. (2014). From politics to protest. *Journal of Democracy*, 25(4), 5–19.

Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. London: Verso Books.

Levitas, R. (1990). Educated hope: Ernst Bloch on abstract and concrete utopia. In Daniel, O. J. and Moylan, T., eds. *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*. London: Verso Books, pp. 65–79.

Levitas, R. (2005). The imaginary reconstitution of society: Or why sociologists and others should take utopia more seriously. *Inaugural Lecture, University of Bristol, 24 October 2005* [Online].

Levitas, R. (2013). *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mannheim, K. (1936). *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.

Outhwaite, W. (1998). Realism and social science. In Archer, M., Bhaskar, B., Collier, A., Lawson, T. and Norrie, A., eds. *Critical Realism: Essential Readings*. London: Routledge, pp. 282–296.

Shapiro, M. J., Bonham, G. M. and Heradstveit, D. (1988). A discursive practices approach to collective decision-making. *International Studies Quarterly*, 32(4), 397–419.

Smilov, D. and Krastev, I. (2008). The rise of populism in Eastern Europe: Policy paper. In Mesežnikov, G., Gyárfášová, O. and Smilov, D., eds. *Populist Politics and Liberal Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*. Working Paper Series [Online]. Bratislava: IVO (IPA), pp. 7–12.

Thompson, P. and Zizek, S., eds. (2013). *The Privatization of Hope: Ernst Bloch and the Future of Utopia*. London: Duke University Press.

Vandenberghe, F. (1999). 'The real is relational': An epistemological analysis of Pierre Bourdieu's generative structuralism. *Sociological Theory*, 17(1), 32–67.

2 Anti-populism and its critics

The battle over the 'liberal consensus'

A strong gust of anger has undoubtedly gripped much of Europe lately. Political contestation has been equally dynamic globally: as Krastev (2014a: 7) noted, by 2014 there had been more than seventy countries with major political protests in the preceding five years alone; and the number of protests by mid-2013 was almost double their number in 2006 (Ortiz et al. 2013). In parallel to popular protests, the political party arena has also become increasingly contested. Several groups of academic literature have addressed this radicalisation of politics. Probably the most visible and dominant strand is that of *comparative democratisation*, within the field of political science. It has generally tended to analyse the recent decade's radicalisation of politics, both at the level of party politics and at the level of grassroots political mobilisation, particularly in light of the notion of *populism*, and sees it in predominantly negative terms (i.e. as a destabilisation force). In opposition to it, within the New Left and radical Left literature, scholars have mounted a serious critique of the hegemony of the former, criticising the former's anti-populism as inherently anti-democratic and conservative. Somewhat aside, the field of social movement studies has also been interested in the political mobilisations, but has mostly been concerned with the more formally organised forms of mobilisations, such as urban, green, and civil rights movements (e.g. Jacobsson and Saxonberg 2013; Jacobsson 2015). Even further aside is a previously dynamic field of research interested in political contestation in the post-socialist context – that of civil society. The research interest in civil society was particularly strong in the region during the 1990s when it was used to conceptualise the region's break with its totalitarian past. Since the late 1990s, however, with the dynamic 'NGO-isation' of civil society, research in the field became increasingly interested in mapping out the myriad organisations which mushroomed, rather than approach the concept more critically. Since the 2000s, then, research studies which are more interested in a critique of power and political struggle at the intersection between state and political movements have largely eschewed the use of the term 'civil society' (as well as avoiding the field altogether), opting instead to conceptualise political struggle in terms of 'populism', 'radical democracy' and social movements. This is why, in this book, I will forgo a concern with the disciplinary field of civil society's engagement with collective mobilisations in the region. In this chapter, instead, I will examine the differing and intensely opposed accounts of

the global and East European political turbulence as developed within the first two academic fields mentioned previously – the comparative democratisation work advanced by scholars of liberal democracy, and the critical theory work developed by students of radical democracy. While I agree with the criticism levelled by the latter towards the former's take on 'populist' politics in the region, I highlight some of what I consider to be problems of many of the radical democratic approaches, specifically in light of their capacity to address CEE's radicalisation in politics, but also in terms of the dominant epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the prevalent approaches in the field.

I shall omit a discussion of the social movements (SM) strand of literature for several reasons. While the SM field has produced very important work which has contributed valuable insights into how movements emerge, operate and disappear, and some of the field's approaches have been applied to the protest mobilisations of CEE to some very fruitful results (e.g. Jacobsson 2015), I consider its theoretical focuses, the questions it poses, and its conceptual and methodological apparatus mostly unsuitable for the aims of the current study. Here are some of the main reasons for this. On a theoretical level, the SM literature has tended to be mostly dominated by the North American positivist sociological tradition which features a more empirical, scientific, and in some ways, empiricist frame. Rather than asking questions about society's constitutive structure and type of power relations, as well as collective mobilisations' 'historical role' therein, this frame has been more focused on the movements themselves. That is, rather than pinning movements to the dialectics of history or type of society, researchers here have been more interested in the particular empirical conditions which facilitate and/or inhibit the development of movements[1] (Crossley 2002: 10–11). In this sense, borrowing Heidegger's (1962) distinction between the 'ontic' and the 'ontological' – where the former refers to concrete, specific realities, and the latter to deeper underlying structures of reality – we can argue that the SM field with its dominant North American analytical paradigm has a strong capacity to investigate the ontic level of collective mobilisations, but lacks the ability to unravel their ontological dimension which is of interest in the current work. What is more, this tradition has tended to see movements as part of a modern framework which takes the state and markets to be immutable, and key, aspects of the political and social arrangement (Price, Nonini and Fox Tree 2008). As a result, social movements have been "transformed from context-specific concepts representing dynamic political and social forces, into predictable, manipulable, and ultimately innocuous parts of modern *liberal* polities" (Osterweil 2014: 476). In a critique of this tradition, Osterweil (2014: 476) writes that it "[h]as naturalized and universalized a particular political form – liberal democracy – removing a great deal of the [social movement] concept's potency as being about more fundamental struggles over the organization of everyday life".

On a more empirical level, the dominant approaches within the field (such as 'resource mobilisation' (McCarthy and Zald 1977), the 'political opportunity structure' (McAdam 1982), or the 'repertoires' (Tilly 1995) and 'frames' (Snow and Benford 2000) approaches tend to make two main assumptions which prove

problematic in light of their capacity to address collective mobilisation specifically in the post-socialist context. First, the SM literature assumes that social movements engage in contentious action primarily against a strong state of the kind developed in Western Europe over several centuries, and/or against this state's established, again over a long period, capitalist market (see also Price, Nonini and Fox Tree 2008; Gagyi 2015). Yet, the post-socialist region differs in many ways from this model of political and economic arrangement. The turbulent state (but also market and class) re-compositions of the twentieth century in CEE often make the field's assumptions about collective mobilisations as incorporated within the state's civil society unfit and even misleading. While the SM literature tends to note the turbulence and turmoil in state and market formation in the region and often accounts for the former's 'historical legacy' (e.g. most works in Jacobsson 2015; Della Porta 2016), it then continues to employ the exact same conceptual and methodological apparatus developed in the very different context of western social mobilisations. Thus, the common assumptions and focuses taken in the SM field often limit the range of questions being posed about the social movements and implicitly privilege certain modes of acquiring knowledge about them (Price, Nonini and Fox Tree 2008), making their capacity to grasp the collective mobilisations in CEE of interest here, questionable.

Yet, as I show below, it can be easily argued that the comparative democratisation literature has similarly not been in any stronger position to pose critical questions which delve into the ontological level of the collective mobilisations, or to offer a wider conceptual and methodological apparatus to study the latter. Indeed, as the review provided in the following discussion demonstrates, it has rather worked with a very narrow range of conceptions, informed mostly by the dominant 'transitological' perspective it has adopted. At the same time, the comparative democratisation field has been the most salient area of academic inquiry about the region's politics, claiming to produce what numerous more critically oriented authors have seen as an 'expert' discourse serving particular political ends under the disguise of 'objective' social science. This is also the field within which particular understandings (which the current work sees as conservative and oppressive) of Bulgaria's 2013 protest wave and other CEE protests have been produced and imposed. In many ways, then, we can think of many of the scholars here as akin to the organic intellectuals (Gramsci 1971) of the post-1989 liberal consensus – a role many of them are keen to emphasise (discussed later). In this way, a critical examination of this strand of literature constitutes a particularly key part of this book's attempt to understand the political polarisation that culminated in recent years' protest mobilisations in the region.

On the left end of the political spectrum, scholars of radical democracy have attempted to shatter the hegemony of the centrist/liberal 'expert' discourse, though mostly with a focus on the collective mobilisations in the global West, rather than those in CEE. The main ideological cleavage between the two sets of scholarship has been between populism and anti-populism, or between a conception of democracy as participatory versus one as representative. I explore these two sets of scholarship in turn as follows.

Anti-populism and the 'expert' discourse of the democratisation literature: the liberal perspective

For a decade now, the spectre of populism has been haunting scholars of democratic transitions globally. Leading analysts and champions of liberal democracy have repeatedly described the last decade as a period of 'democratic breakdown', in which new democratic states across the world, as well as in Central and Eastern Europe, "backslide" away from democracy. Analyses of authoritarian drifts, declining civil liberties, political polarisation and popular mobilisations in different countries and contexts across the globe have been lumped together under ominously sounding titles, such as 'The Great Democracy Melt-down' (Kurlantzick 2011) or 'Democracy's Deepening Recession' (Diamond 2014). Particularly in the European context, this has formed part of an intense anti-populist campaign both inside and outside of academia, which has treated contemptuously all 'populist' politics, seeing them mostly as a democratic 'malaise', which spreads irrational, and anti-liberal attitudes in society, thus eroding democratic institutions (Fieschi, Morris and Caballero 2013; Swoboda and Wiersma 2008). It is mostly within this literature that recent years' 'radical ascendance' in Central and Eastern Europe has been explored as well. A highly visible, and in many ways dominant, strand of literature which has addressed the CEE's waves of mass demonstrations and electoral breakthroughs of 'populist' parties has been within the field of comparative democratisation. Political scientists such as Ágh (2014, 2016); Beissinger and Sasse (2014); Bohle and Greskovits (2007); Dawson and Hanley (2016); Greskovits (2015); Hanley (2014); Hanley and Sikk (2013); Kaldor and Selchow (2013); Krastev (2007a, 2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2014b); Rupnik (2007); Smilov and Krastev (2008); and others, as well as publications such as the *Journal of Democracy* and the network of journals *Eurozine*, have been particularly active in seeking explanations for the political turbulence and assessing its impact on democracy in the region. In light of CEE's 'populism', many students of democratisation have interpreted the political polarisation in CEE as 'democratic backsliding' or 'democratic rollback' (e.g. Rupnik 2007; Greskovits 2007, 2015; Ágh 2014, 2016). When they speak of backsliding, these political scientists are mostly concerned with the rise of populist parties and the ensuing sharp electoral swings, with incumbent elites' attempts to concentrate power, with the decline of public trust in democratic institutions, and the increased frequency and scale of outbursts of popular protest (see Hanley 2014: 164). Particularly alarming for many of them seem to be what Ivan Krastev has called the "massive outburst of social fury" (2014a: 6), which they see as a conduit for the rise of authoritarian populist parties. Indeed, in the middle of 2013 the number of protests globally was almost double the number of protests in 2006 (Ortiz et al. 2013), and the CEE region has seen a number of significant waves of protest mobilisation in the past decade.

Before I move on to consider some of the problematic interpretations I see in the democratisation literature, I need to open a brief historical caveat. To be able to understand (the dominance of) the interpretation of popular mobilisation as a destabilising force and thus as a threat, one needs to consider the political

conditions under which the democratisation strand of scholarship developed. Propelled by observations of what Samuel Huntington (1991) called the 'third wave of democracy' – that is, democratisation in Southern Europe, Latin America and some countries in Asia in the last quarter of the twentieth century – numerous governmental and non-governmental organisations "devoted to promoting democracy" appeared in the United States during the 1980s (Carothers 2002: 6). Their work partly drew on the earlier scholarship developed in the field of 'transitology' and in particular on the work of Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead 1986). When the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union collapsed, the model was extended to this part of the world in an attempt to analyse and design suitable interventions (ibid.). The analytical framework this "new democracy-promotion community" (ibid.: 6) adopted was the model of *democratic transition*. From this perspective, the countries emerging from socialism after 1989 were 'delayed' in relation to the older Western democracies, and thus a process of 'transition' was expected to shorten and eventually erase their 'distance' from 'democratic consolidation'. The political foundations of this framework were thus grounded in a 'neo-modernising' model (see Sakwa 2012), which equated 'transition' with 'Westernisation', presupposing the Western model as universally applicable, as well as morally and technically superior to other forms of social development. Thus, for two decades, the dominant approach to political analyses of the region involved measuring 'the crystallisation of democracy', mostly by the pace of moving towards the Western model with its central pillars: free market economy, liberal democratic polity, and a Tocquevillean style civil society. Observing the rise of populism in the recent decade, Bermeo (2016: 6) argues that such "'democratic backsliding' denotes a wilful turning away" from this Western democratic ideal.

Of course, the dominance of the transitological approach to the region should be seen as part of the wider post–Cold War Washington consensus which gave rise to an era of 'technocratic governance' that eschewed any popular grounding. This entire post-1989 period of post-democratic mutation of liberal democracy has been characterised by a dormant, but consistently strong anti-populist discourse in and beyond academia. With the gradual fragmentation and dissipation of the liberal consensus during the 2000s, and augmented by the global economic crisis set off in 2007, political, journalistic and academic anti-populist discourse intensified tremendously in the last decade. In this way, it is important not to divorce the anti-populism of the academic field described here from the anti-populism dominant in the political field proper.

Most of the authors analysing the radicalisation of politics in the region from the comparative democratisation perspective tend to note that it is particularly since the accession of ten CEE countries to the European Union in 2004–2007 and since the onset of the global economic recession that riots and mass demonstrations have intensified and centrist parties have radicalised. They see the rise of populist politics as a post-accession phenomenon linked to inflated expectations about EU membership, as well as 'fatigue' from the austerity regime of the transitions. Others, such as Smilov and Krastev (2008), Gerrits (2008), and

Rupnik (2007), trace the rise of populism in the region back to at least the early 2000s (Smilov and Krastev 2008: 9) and see it as a reaction to the post-democratic character of politics in the region since the 1990s. They argue that the post-1989 political process in the region was impotent because EU accession was a heavily elitist project, which consistently prioritised the need for economic liberalisation at the expense of (and also benefitting from) low political participation and weak civil society (Rupnik 2007). Such an elite consensus engendered a depoliticised technocratic culture of 'governance' which lacked accountability – politicians could not be held accountable for policies which were predetermined, even inevitable (Gerrits 2008; Krastev 2008). In the words of Ost (2005: 95), "By presenting their policies not so much as 'good' ones but as 'necessary' ones, not as 'desirable' but as 'rational', liberals left their supporters no acceptable way to protest or express dissatisfaction". Or as Krastev (2008) summarises, ordinary citizens experienced transitional democracies as regimes where voters could change governments but could not change policies. (On the political and academic Left, this state of politics has widely been referred to as 'post-democracy' or 'post-politics' [e.g. Mouffe 2005; Rancière 2004].) Hence, from the perspective of democratisation, as Gerrits (2008: 62–63) concludes, these processes might be at the root of the political tensions CEE has been experiencing in the past decade – as a sort of a 'return of politics' to CEE: "Self-enforced conformity is over. There is room for politics again: for non-consensus, for polarisation, for political choice, in other words: for true democratic accountability".

The view of the intensification of political turbulence in CEE as a return to genuine politics, and thus a challenge to the 'post-democratic consensus', is shared by scholars across the political spectrum, from liberal scholars such as Ivan Krastev (2007a, 2008) to radical democracy theorists such as Chantal Mouffe (2005). I will address the latter's critique of post-politics later in this chapter. For now, I want to expand on the former's analyses.

Democratisation scholars tend to often engage in what can be seen as a *formalist* critique of post-democracy: the latter is alarming only in terms of its consequences for the authority of liberal institutions, rather than in terms of substantive issues related to the *de facto* isolation of electorates from political decision-making. In other words, since their critique is *internal* to the transition's liberal consensus which the post-political was born out of, they see the post-political situation as worrisome only in terms of the stability of liberal (representative) democracy. In this way, what appears problematic for one of the most prolific and widely cited scholars in the field, Ivan Krastev, is the disenchantment of citizens with liberal politics, a "strong disaffection with [representative] democracy", and a "lack of trust in its institutions" (Krastev 2008, 2013a, 2014a). Such interpretation is certainly reflective of undeniable tendencies (such as diminishing levels of trust). Yet, seeing the rise of radical voices in the region mostly in terms of a growing mistrust of liberal democracy (i.e. only as a threat to liberal democracy) works to obscure its radical potential for emancipatory and progressivist struggles beyond the framework of the liberal polity.

What is more, other scholars go even further in their dismissal of CEE's rise of radical politics, claiming the latter is an "outright threat to democracy" in general

(not just liberal democracy; see Severin 2008). Ágh (2016: 3), for example, speaks of "de-Europeanization" and "de-democratization". And although most scholars in the field often recognise the increased popular mobilizations in the region as a "participatory turn", which "brought an end to the 'permissive consensus' or deep apathy of the broad masses" (ibid.: 7), they seem to unanimously agree that the destabilisation that such "radicalization of sizeable groups" brings, threatens to reverse the "direction of democratic development" (Greskovits 2015: 28; see also entire edited volume by Swoboda and Wiersma 2008).

The eagerness with which these authors are ready to assess the 'populist' trend as a "*dangerous* mutation" [emphasis added] (Smilov and Krastev 2008: 7) and to then go on to offer 'solutions' to this problem reflects a strong anti-populist stance which is built on two main assumptions: 1) that these populists threaten to trump minorities' rights and 2) that in their desire to clear the way for direct contact between elites and the people, they pose an authoritarian (tyrannical) threat. Krastev (2007a, 2007b) summarises this set of characteristics as "democratic illiberalism". It is also important to note, however, that he and other democratisation scholars seem to identify these dangerous tendencies based on their analyses of the behaviour of *elite* forms of populism observed in the region – that is, they mostly ground these assumptions in their observation of political parties' behaviour (see, e.g., how Hanley [2014] defines populism). Yet, they commonly go on to attribute the same set of illiberal and authoritarian tendencies to the *popular* forms of populist mobilisation (i.e. to popular protest movements and events) as well, having conducted no adequate analyses of the language and practices of the latter. In other words, they frequently make claims about protest mobilizations often based only on analyses of the behaviour of populist political parties which use the momentum of popular mobilizations to come into power. In this, they fail to differentiate what can be seen as two distinct levels of what they call populist politics – a *popular* (grassroots) and an *elite* (party) level, which then allows them to speak of "populism from above" (Ágh 2016: 3). This tendency to subsume the *popular protest mobilizations*' political articulation under the "democratic illiberalism" of *populist parties* at best limits our understanding of the popular mobilizations in the region, and at worst operates ideologically as a means to dismiss and delegitimize them *in toto*. This is a fallacy which, amongst others, the current book will address by moving the focus of political analysis away from political party behaviour, and onto grassroots political mobilisation instead.

Much of the democratisation literature has further missed to recognise the complexity and heterogeneity of the popular unrest in the region. When they do differentiate between different segments of the collective mobilisations, scholars in the area habitually draw a firm line between 'illiberal, xenophobic' and 'moderate pro-market liberal' factions of discontent. Popular mobilizations in CEE tend to often be seen in either of two ways: as anti-corruption struggles by a 'frustrated' middle class (Greskovits 2007; Krastev 2008) (foreign media and academic research tend to be very keen on finding a 'middle class' each time news of mass protests in CEE comes in), or as neo-fascist trouble coming from the nethermost stratum of societies in the region. The former is commonly seen

as legitimate, and the latter – as illegitimate. For example, Smilov and Krastev (2008) differentiate between what they call the 'soft' populism of the former and the 'hard' populism of the latter. Soft populism, they argue, signals a crisis of representation, where the discontent is only aimed at the existing structure of representation; hard populism, on the other hand, they see as posing a more severe threat to the constitutional framework, challenging the fundamental principles of liberal democracy (Smilov and Krastev 2008: 9). In this interpretative scheme, there seems to be no place for different articulations, for example of middle classes who are also illiberal/xenophobic, or of groups challenging the liberal democratic order but lacking nationalistic/xenophobic inclinations. Thus, for instance, Ivan Krastev and other analysts of the Bulgarian protests of 2013 tended to see the first (Winter) protest wave as mostly advanced by 'hard populists' of disgruntled 'losers of the transition', and the second (Summer) protest wave as headed by the 'soft populists' (or sometimes even 'anti-populists') of the 'frustrated middle class' (Krastev 2013b, 2013c).

There is rarely any attempt to analyse the complexity of the 'hard populists' – their voices are always rather swiftly cast as illegitimate in a blanket manner. In contrast, democratisation scholars such as Greskovits (2007) and Krastev (2008, 2013c, 2013d) tend to often cast a favourable eye onto the group of unhappy civic agents they refer to as the 'frustrated middle classes'. In their analyses, the latter's discursive and extra-discursive practices at times come under the rubric of 'soft populism', and at other times even as anti-populism, depending on the context. (We will later see that the 'frustrated middle class" of the Bulgarian Summer protest was seen as pro-austerity and thus anti-populist [e.g. Krastev 2013c, 2013d].) The 'frustrated middle classes', in their interpretation, seem to be unhappy with the political aspects of what they see as an '*unfinished transformation*', and seem committed to correct the shortcomings of the prevailing political sentiments (Greskovits 2007: 43). Greskovits explains that the reality of the practical outcomes of the macroeconomic and political reforms of the transition seem to have made pro-reform voters less patient with centrist approaches and populist appeals, and have become more eager to hear more radical appeals (ibid.). He and other scholars of the region find better-off groups, often including city-dwellers, young people and the better educated, to be unhappy "with populist appeals out of impatience with other groups which they often see as obstacles to upward mobility" (ibid.: 43). As they note, these groups' rhetoric has consistently featured derisive treatment of pensioners, of 'abusers' of public health care or social security system, and of large poor families as 'welfare parasites', that is, beneficiaries of 'wasteful' social protection paid for by an overtaxed middle class (ibid.). Greskovits (2007: 43) further describes their outlook in this way: "[C]ompletion of the 'unfinished transition' through radical structural reforms would liberate these better off groups from responsibility for those masses".

Although scholars of liberal democracy seem committed to condemn such discourses, on some occasions they appear to implicitly legitimate them (especially when analysing them from within a non-academic perspective). For example, commenting on the Bulgarian protests of 2013 in non-academic online media, Ivan

Krastev made vastly differing analyses of the February and then the Summer wave of collective mobilisations. In the midst of the Winter protest, Krastev did not seem particularly keen on endorsing the protests as a positive political development. Here are snippets of what he had to say about the Winter mobilisation in a short article titled *Bulgaria's Revolt Against Consensus* written for Project Syndicate, 13th March 2013:

> [The] widespread outrage does not translate into a strong vision. While Bulgaria's protesters forced the government to resign, they did not demand a new government. Rather, they called for the immediate fulfilment of vague, often contradictory demands, including a new constituent assembly and radical changes to the political system. They appear to expect their government to function like a computer – enter a command and the desired program is run – but they lack a strategy for building such a system. As a result, the recent outburst of civic energy is unlikely to fix Bulgaria's problems. . . .
>
> [W]hat is at stake in Bulgaria today – as in Italy – is the country's very governability . . . Europe's choice is not between austerity and economic growth. Rather, EU leaders must choose between flexibility and rigidity, between permitting voters to make mistakes and losing legitimacy. As Bulgaria's crisis demonstrates, without hope, financial stability is just another name for stagnation.
>
> (Krastev 2013b)

In contrast, only three months later, commenting on the Summer protest wave, Krastev's view of protest activity seems vastly different. Under the title *Bulgaria, Protest for the Future*, Krastev writes:

> For the first time in years, the civil society of Bulgaria is voicing strong demands for genuine reform of the ailing state institutions and for effective democracy. These demands for reform are homegrown and have a grassroots pedigree . . . [T]he peaceful protests in Bulgaria are momentous for the future of democracy in this country. They show that there is a committed civil society which will no longer tolerate corporate takeover of public institutions, or unprincipled coalitions with nationalistic or irresponsible parties. Our hope is that the lack of violence and the civilised behaviour of the protesters will ensure that the protests draw international attention, rather than allow them to go largely unnoticed. In our judgment, the moment demands broad support for the democratic efforts of Bulgarian society.
>
> (Krastev 2013c)

And under the title *Why Bulgaria's Protests Stand Out in Europe*, Krastev (2013d) further frames the Summer protest as part of 'the global revolution of the middle class', further adding: "The global protests are not an expression of what Vaclav Havel once called 'the power of the powerless' but of the frustration of the empowered" (ibid., no page).

Amidst this often-explicit support for 'protests of the middle class' (and derogation of the 'populist' protest of the precariat), there is certainly a very disconcerting lack of adequate critical examination of the discursive practices of what have been called the 'frustrated middle classes'. In fact, with very few exceptions (e.g. Tsoneva and Medarov 2013, 2014; Ivancheva 2013a, 2013b; Kofti 2014) across the academic study of the region in different fields, there is a glaring gap in terms of a critical attempt to pose questions about the extent to which middle class discourses which deride the poor as a 'burden' and an 'obstacle' to the transitional society's progress (to a liberal-capitalist modernity) are at odds with progressive, emancipatory and egalitarian principles, as well as questions about the impact and consequences of such discourses for the social, economic and political environment in the region.

What is more, a critical understanding of the class basis of the section of the population which has been seen as, and often understands itself as, a 'frustrated middle class', is almost entirely missing. It seems that the term 'middle class' has been all too readily and uncritically applied here: the specific ideological structures underpinning the discursive and extra-discursive practices which have constituted a 'middle class', and the role of intellectuals in this constitution have been gravely overlooked. The role of intellectuals was a focus of research attention before 1989 and in the 1990s, but has increasingly been ignored in the recent ten to fifteen years. A particularly good exception in terms of a focus on both the issue of class (and classificatory struggles) and the role of intellectuals can be found in the sociological work of Tomasz Zarycki (2009, 2014) whose studies of post-socialist Polish society have consistently emphasised what he calls the 'intelligentsia doxa' as a necessary focus of an analysis of post-socialist power relations. He specifically highlights in his analyses the dominance of contemporary Polish intelligentsia in terms of a form of social power that is defined in cultural and moral terms, and that is particularly potent in legitimising political and economic hierarchies (Zarycki 2014: 64–88). I will return to his and other scholars' work (beyond the democratisation literature) on class and intellectuals in the next chapter.

Secondly, a recognition of the heterogeneity, complexity and potential for meaningful (emancipatory) agency on the part of what anti-populists both in and out of academia see as 'illiberal and xenophobic' popular classes is also entirely missing from the democratisation literature: for example, Greskovits (2015: 2) clearly casts the same blanket over both "the frequent disruptive protests against unemployment, poverty and uncertainty stemming from austerity", and the radical right-wing mobilisations and party breakthroughs. In fact, nationalism and populism are often used interchangeably by Eastern European scholars. What is more, as Medarov (2015) notes, both nationalism and populism are frequently seen as leftist and attributed to 'nostalgia for communism' (Tismăneanu 1998; Malinov 2007; Krastev 2009). For example, Ghodsee (2008, cited by Medarov 2015: 5) claims that the Bulgarian populist party Ataka, which is generally considered to be strongly nationalist, holds a "radical left agenda lying just beneath the xenophobic rhetoric". Another analyst of the region, Tismăneanu (1998) similarly argues that "[i]n post-Leninist countries, one encounters among the illiberal nationalists,

former communists, socialists, neofascists, traditional conservatives, and populists committed to the search for a 'third way' between communism and capitalism, united against democratic, liberal, modern values" (Tismăneanu 1998, cited by Medarov 2015: 6). What is further particularly emphasised is that this populist/ nationalist amalgamation is *conservative* in character. In Svetoslav Malinov's (2008) words,

> Populism is an instinctive reaction against radical changes in the traditional way of life and especially in economic relations and activity. Populist thinking mythologizes the reasons for these changes, representing them as omnipotent and unfathomable forces driven by central power in the capital city, or even worse, by foreign power-holders.

In fact, authors embracing an anti-populist stance have often seen as conservative not only the 'illiberal hard populists', but also the middle class 'soft populists'. Ivan Krastev has argued that in contrast to movements of the 1960s, the global protest movement today is

> less utopian, ideological, and future-oriented . . . In a peculiar sense, this new generation of radicals is conservative and nostalgic. They take to the streets not to ask for change but to prevent change. If in 1968 protesters on the streets of Paris and Berlin demanded to live in a world different from the one of their parents, the new radicals insist on the right to live in the world of their parents.
>
> (Krastev 2013a: 106)

Yet, can we here speak of a desire to go back to a more progressive period as conservative?

Finally, most of the accounts summarised previously fail to pay adequate attention to the intersection, or even strife, between the two social groupings they differentiate between – for now, let us refer to them as a wide coalition of subaltern groups[2] versus what has been labelled 'frustrated middle classes' – an inter-class strife, that is underpinned by important class power imbalances that crystallised in the last two decades. Importantly, the democratisation literature has largely failed to recognise the key role played by intellectuals in the *construction and construal*[3] of such a conflict.

Overall then, although, as Sakwa (2012) notes, it is the early work on the post-socialist transitions that was particularly ideological and prescriptive, the democratisation literature (both academic and political) today still appears imbued with an ethos of expert dogmatism, a particularly strong feature of which is the anti-populist and alarmist understanding of populism. It is important to remember, however, that the anti-populism of the academic *expert discourse* on CEE can only be understood as part of the wider offensive, both political and academic, of the post-democratic discourse against strong popular participation in political life. This anti-populism has been hegemonic in at least the past two decades (and not only in the CEE region), and has been studied critically by New Left authors such

as Badiou (2012); Canovan (2005); Hardt and Negri (2012); Katsambekis (2014a, 2014b); Laclau (2005); Rancière (2006, 2010); Stavrakakis (2013, 2014); and Zizek (2012). In the following discussion, I review some of their main arguments in relation to the collective mobilisations of the past decade or so.

The critique of anti-populism and the radical democratic perspective

It is in vastly different, and opposing, terms that the radical Left has seen the growing political polarisation and mobilisation in recent years. In general, they have interpreted the recent global wave of protest mobilisations as the resurgence of 'the people' (Badiou 2012; Dean 2012), as the rise of the biopolitical 'multitude' (Hardt and Negri 2012), as 'networks of outrage and hope' (Castells 2015) and as a 'counter-hegemonic rupture' (Katsambekis 2014c). Scholars here have engaged in theoretico-political debates which have attempted to conceptualise the democratic agency which emerged in the collective mobilisations, but also to respond to both the political and academic discourse of anti-populism described previously.

One of the most significant debates pertaining to the conceptualisation of the collective mobilisations has been between hegemonic and post-hegemonic conceptions of democratic agency (see Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis 2014). On one hand, thinkers such as Jacques Rancière, Slavoj Zizek and Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe have advanced a hegemonic conception of political and democratic agency grounded in the notion of 'the people'. They operate with a conception of politics wherein sovereignty, state, power and antagonism are key categories, insisting on the need to recognise the ineradicability of antagonism and hegemony. Thus, they interpret the global protest mobilisations in terms of counter-hegemonic struggles and as renewed politics of 'the people'. On the other hand, scholars such as Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt, John Holloway and Manuel Castells have advocated a post-hegemonic – that is, non-statist, non-representative – conception of politics which favours an 'absolute democracy' of a horizontalist 'biopolitical multitude' (Hardt and Negri 2005, 2012). Thus, the latter see in the recent global protest wave the beginnings of a non-hegemonic, egalitarian mode of democratic praxis where hierarchies are eradicated and social agents collaborate in a horizontalist and autonomous manner (Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis 2014).

I do not intend to engage particularly closely with this debate, for what is important in light of the concerns of this book is that both conceptualisations noted previously draw on an understanding of the global collective mobilisations of recent years as an inherently democratic process and as a generally positive political development. In this, they have stood to challenge the global dominant 'expert' discourse of anti-populism, part of which was described in the previous section. According to Katsambekis (2014b: 52), anti-populism "needs to be studied in its own right as distinct discursive repertoire and probably as part of the ongoing post-democratic turn of western democracies". He further argues that

> today the popular-democratic subject of modernity, as historically incarnated in 'the people' is systematically ignored, marginalized, even stigmatized and

suppressed, as contemporary European elites develop a new 'fear of the masses' – or 'demophobia' (Marliere 2013) – and attempt their own 'revolution from above' (Balibar 2013) . . . the (discursive) marginalization of 'the people' (or 'antipopulism') reflects a broader shift from the political (as antagonism, rupture, etc.) to the post-political (as management, administration, consensus, etc.) and from democracy to post-democracy, from antagonism and political debate on alternatives to 'neutral' management and 'enlightened' administration. . . .

(Katsambekis 2014a: 557–558)

The radical Left's critique of the post-political then identifies the dismissal and outright demonization of populism as an instrument of post-democracy, in a pursuit for an anti-democratic programme which embraces a notion of power that "govern[s] without people" (Rancière 2006: 80). This critique is probably most vigorously advanced within the tradition of the Essex School of discourse analysis, and particularly by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (see, e.g., Laclau 2005; Mouffe 2000, 2013; Howarth, Norval and Stavrakakis 2000). Laclau and Mouffe attempt to rehabilitate the populist phenomenon as a fundamental condition for the operation of democracy. Populism for them describes the transformation of sectional particularisms into more general demands, thus forming what they call 'chains of equivalence' between otherwise divergent demands. Conceptualised in this way, rather than a denial of pluralism (a charge levelled by anti-populists), 'populism' describes exactly the opposite – a pluralist space, which "assembles a homogenous identity out of heterogeneous demands, incommensurable practices, ideologies, contexts, and social groups" (Medarov 2015: 3). However, Laclau's understanding of populism has been criticised for its formalism: seeing it simply as the dominance of the logic of equivalence over the logic of difference means it can be filled with any political content (Stavrakakis 2004: 263–264).

In contrast to Laclau's (2005) conception of populism as essentially all politics, Jacques Rancière sees populism as a semantic tool to denigrate people's attempts to be recognised as equals. For him politics is about making the democratic demand 'to be counted'. In Rancière's (2013, no page) words:

And so neither the 'populists' nor the people as presented by ritual denunciations of populism actually match their definition. But this is no worry for those who wave this phantom about. The essential thing for them is to amalgamate the very idea of a democratic people with the image of the dangerous crowd.

Key to Rancière's understanding of populism and anti-populism is his distinction between *police* and *politics*. He uses 'police' to refer to the existing social distribution (which he calls 'the distribution of the sensible') of status, roles and places (i.e. the unequal distribution of power into what he calls *parts*), and the system of mechanisms for the legitimisation of this distribution. '*Police*' then pertains to

the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying, [that] sees those bodies are assigned by names to a particular place and task; it is an order

of the visible and the sayable that sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise.

(Rancière 1999: 29)

In other words, it determines what is to be considered legitimate and illegitimate perception, talk and behaviour. 'Politics', on the other hand, Rancière uses to describe the moments 'police' gets challenged by those 'with no part', that is those who are not counted in the 'part of those with no part'. By enacting an egalitarian principle, those 'with no part' disrupt the social order and challenge the established 'distribution of the sensible'.

Importantly, when those 'with no part' challenge the established modes of social and political representation, they do not demand only the part owed them. Since theirs is not one part amongst others,[4] which could simply be added to the already existing count of parts, in their democratic disruption of the social order, they demand all parts, identifying themselves with the community as a whole:

> It is in the name of the wrong done them by the other parties that the people identify with the whole of the community. Whoever has no part – the poor of ancient times, the third estate, the modern proletariat – cannot in fact have any part other than all or nothing. . . .
>
> (Rancière 1999: 9)

One last element of Rancière's work that is also particularly important in the Left's analysis of collective mobilisations is his conception of identity, and what he calls 'disidentification'. Politics in Rancière's work is what destabilises existing identities (putting them in crisis). It is then in this process of destabilisation (disidentification) that another process – of subjectification, or the formation of a 'subject', which generates new possibilities for individual and collective action. However, the political subject for Rancière is not a group that "'becomes aware' of itself, finds its voice, imposes its weight on society" (ibid.: 40). Neither is it a social class, nor an ethnic community or a sex, even when it is based on collectives of this type. Instead, it is an event, or in his words, "an operator that connects and disconnects different areas, regions, identities, functions, and capacities existing in the configuration of a given experience" (ibid.: 40).

Another particularly relevant theoretical account of populism has been offered by Giorgio Agamben. Agamben (1998) has problematised the "constitutive polysemy marking the category 'the people'" (Stavrakakis 2014) in Western Europe. In modern European languages, he argues, 'people' refers to the *sovereign political subject* in total, and at the same time – to the *class*, that is the poor, the displaced, and the excluded from politics (Agamben 1998: 176). Based on this conception of 'the people' as inherently split and biopolitical, he sees the structure of politics as comprising of 'the bare life' – '*zoe*' – of the excluded people on one hand, and the political existence – '*bios*' – of the included people on the other hand. The people can then designate both "the People as a whole and sovereign political body", but also (and opposed to) "the people as a fragmentary multiplicity

of needy, oppressed bodies" (Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis 2014: 13). In other words, as Stavrakakis summarises, the people is simultaneously *part* and *whole* (Canovan 2005). This 'biopolitical fracture' then underpins the modern political conflict between these two 'peoples'. Following Agamben then, Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis (2014: 13) suggest: "Our age is the methodical attempt to overcome the scission by eliminating the excluded people in order to produce a single and unified people".

The radical democratic perspective on popular mobilisations in CEE

It is mostly on theoretical accounts of democracy such as Laclau's, Rancière's and Agamben's that many of the current New Left analyses of 'populism' draw. Yet, the bulk of these analyses in recent years have tended to focus on the Greek case,[5] on social movements such as the (originally American, then global) Occupy Movement, on Spain's Indignados (as well as the autonomous movements in Latin America, such as the Zapatistas), and on other anti-austerity protests in mostly Western regions.[6] The analyses of these movements have predominantly interpreted people's grievances as *against inequality* and *austerity*; and the same interpretative frame has been applied to mobilisations in CEE (for a critique of this trend, see Ivancheva 2013a). On the other hand, there has been relatively much less critical attention, on the western radical Left, paid to 'populist' politics in Central and Eastern Europe.[7] And when the radical Left's conceptual and analytical frameworks are applied to analyses of CEE populism, they tend to often continue to follow the same interpretative pattern (i.e. seeing protest mobilisations as *anti-austerity*). However, as the current work will show, a closer look at the rhetoric, grievances and demands of protesters, as well as the internal conflicts within the protest movements in the region, shows a much more complicated picture. For example, along with (or rather apart from) people who protested against budget cuts, against poverty and against class and other inequalities, there were many protesters in Bulgaria in the summer protest wave of 2013 who voiced explicit or implicit support *for* austerity – a position euphemised as '*pro-reform*'. Many of them did not voice concerns about inequality (and seemed to see inequality as normal and functional), but rather about corruption and the rule of law. Most of the Romanian protest waves of recent years are also illustrative of the anti-corruption rather than anti-austerity protest mood in the region. As noted in the previous section, some of the democratisation literature, most notably in the figure of Ivan Krastev, has partly accounted for these complexities by drawing a distinction between what they call 'soft populists' or anti-populist protesters (pro-reform/austerity) on the one hand, and 'hard populists' (anti-austerity) protesters on the other. However, the literature on the radical Left which has attempted to address these complexities has been much more limited. Important exceptions in the Bulgarian case are Tsoneva and Medarov (2013, 2014); Nikolova (2014); and Ivancheva (2013a, 2013b); as well as Cirjan (2016) and Tichindeleanu (2017) in Romania.

This is not to say that the radical democratic analyses of the Greek mobilisations, of the Occupy Movement and the other political insurgencies, have tended

to homogenise the popular mobilisations. They have specifically attacked the 'expert' anti-populist discourse (both academic and political) for its 'theory of the two extremes' (see, e.g., Katsambekis and Stavrakakis 2014: 122) which posits that left-wing and right-wing populism are two sides of the same coin, and hence equally dangerous. In this, the New Left has tried to recognise the heterogeneity and variability within 'populism', drawing a firm distinction between 1) a left-wing populism which is inclusionary, plural, future-oriented, and emancipatory, on the one hand, and 2) a right-wing populism which is radically and ethnically exclusionary, anti-democratic, and authoritarian (ibid.: 122). In short, responding to the liberal-centrist academic and political conflation of populism, nationalism and socialism (dubbed the 'theory of the two extremes'), the New Left has insisted on a distinction between (illegitimate) populist right mobilisations and (legitimate) populist left mobilisations.

Separating out progressive from conservative forces is undoubtedly of utmost necessity and importance. However, the bulk of these analyses are often grounded in a post-Marxist and postmodern perspective, drawing heavily on the works of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and the linguistically oriented post-structuralism, all of which emphasise a 'non-essentialist' understanding of reality that give primacy to discourses (as opposed to materialist explanations). Their post-Marxist approaches tend to be critical of 'economic and class reductionism' and emphasise pluralism, indeterminacy and contingency. Thus, they reject the Marxist assumption that political and economic struggles are expressions of a class subject constituted prior to the struggle itself, and argue there may not be an 'overlap' between class positions and political subjectivity (or consciousness) needed for the struggle. In other words, they claim the economy does not determine the 'superstructure' but superstructural political impulses are 'autonomous'. From this perspective, the critique of 'right-wing populism' and the promotion of 'left-wing populism' – as discourses not determined by and dependent on the class positions of the individuals/groups articulating them – makes sense. Yet, I will argue in this book that drawing such a dualist distinction between right-wing and left-wing populism based only on an analysis of *discourses* without tracing these discourses' grounding in the specific politico-economic conditions of the actors articulating them, risks imposing a dualistic account of the popular mobilisations that ignores the possibilities for the existence of *hybrid and contradicting political articulations* on the part of the social agents involved in the struggles. Thus, in the next chapter I will argue that it is important that social actors are recognised as being subject to constraints that do not emanate from the discursive level but from structural relations of domination, such as class and ethnicity. In this, I also follow Terry Eagleton's (1991) and Slavoj Zizek's (1994) critique of the failure of Discourse Theory (discussed in the next chapter) to provide an account of how political interests are constituted. The theoretical synthesis I propose in the next chapter between a Gramscian theory of hegemony (focusing on both class and culture) and a Blochian theory of ideology and utopia (focusing on human agency to imagine an alternative social order) aim precisely to explain how the articulation of interests relates to a social actor's social position, ultimately positing that class and economy are crucial in determining

political interests and identities (and that the cleavages these create can be further analytically revealed through focusing on their utopian articulations).

Conclusion

To recap, then, there are several key disciplinary and political perspectives from which recent popular mobilisations globally and in CEE have been theorised: 1) the democratisation literature in the field of comparative political science, which tends to be situated within the liberal-centrist political plane, and 2) the radical democratic literature on the political radical Left. The former studies the mobilisations from the analytical perspective of *transitology*. As argued previously, transitology has been heavily influenced by, and has itself influenced, political interpretations as well as practical political developments in the region. As such, a large part of this literature should not be seen in terms of a detached (scientific) set of discourses, but rather as a set of frequently politically motivated and motivating discourse which needs to be approached critically, specifically in terms of its work over the past twenty-plus years to construct and legitimise a particularistic set of discourses that have served to manufacture consent for an elite-engineered project of post-socialist development which is "grounded on a hieratic Westernising logos" (Sakwa 2012: 43), imposing a neo-modernising project underpinned by the "liberal historicism of the 'end of history' type" (Sakwa 2012: 47). This set of literature has conceptualised recent years' political polarisation and frequent collective mobilisations in CEE as '*populism*' painted in almost entirely negative terms (e.g. as representing 'democratic backsliding'). It is precisely these interpretations of the political mobilisations as populist nonsense which I challenged in the first part of this chapter. The academic radical Left which has responded to the anti-populism of the democratisation scholars has mostly theorised the global and CEE mobilisations as a resurgence of democratic politics, rather than as 'democratic rollback'. However, although key figures in the field, such as Laclau, Ranciére and Agamben, have offered useful conceptual frameworks for understanding the mobilisations, very few of the key radical democratic scholars seem to have addressed the political mobilisations in CEE, mostly focusing instead on the anti-austerity protests of Occupy Wall Street, of progressive movements in Greece, of Spain's Indignados, and so on. There are also very few studies in either the liberal-centrist democratisation field or on the New/radical Left which have yet adequately addressed the social (class) cleavages that surfaced during the popular mobilisations, be it in CEE or globally. Although the democratisation literature has pointed to a distinction between 'soft populists' (as well as 'anti-populist' [pro-reform]) protesters on the one hand, and 'hard populists' on the other hand, these analyses have consistently endorsed the former for their support of liberal capitalism, and derided the latter for their attempts to challenge the liberal social order. On the other hand, with very few exceptions, the radical democratic perspectives on the New Left have mostly failed to adequately address the heterogeneity of the popular mobilisations in CEE. Their research attention in the last few years has mostly fallen on the anti-austerity mobilisations in the global West rather than on the turbulence in the post-socialist space. In their attempts

to counter the blanket manner in which the anti-populist affront of the liberal-centrist 'expert' discourse has painted all populism as essentially bad for democracy, these scholars commonly argue for a distinction between a progressive (legitimate) left-wing populism and a conservative (illegitimate) right-wing populism. Whilst it succeeds in challenging the 'expert' discourses' take on populism as all evil, this move to draw attention to populism's propensity to be either progressive or regressive (inclusionary or exclusionary, left-wing or right-wing) has its downsides. It too fails to account for potential hybrid and contradicting articulations between left-wing and right-wing, progressive and conservative, ideas within one and the same social group and even within an individual agent's 'common sense'. This stems from their inability to explain how political articulation (of interests and identities) relates to a social actor's social (class) position.

Overall, then, it will be this book's aim to fill the gap that the radical democratic perspectives have left in accounting for the popular mobilisations in the post-socialist context of Eastern Europe. It further aims to offer a radical democratic perspective on the post-socialist context's complex ideological articulations that breaks the dominant pattern of focusing on progressive anti-austerity, anti-neoliberal movements or conservative, nationalist mobilisations. I do this by offering a theoretical and conceptual framework which pays heed to agents' conscious and deliberate political actions on the terrain of civil society.

Notes

1 For a more detailed exposition of the differences between the North American and the European traditions in SM studies, see Crossley (2002: 10–13).
2 'Subaltern' is the term Antonio Gramsci (1971) uses to describe dominated classes (see next chapter).
3 Throughout this book, I use 'construction' and 'construal' in the same way Fairclough, Jessop and Sayer (2004) use them to account for the role of language as both constitutive of, and constituted by, social reality.
4 The 'part' of 'those without a part' is essentially empty, precisely because they have no part.
5 This is understandable considering the intensive affront against the Greek popular impulse by the European 'expert' political and journalistic discourse.
6 There has also been much Leftist scholarly attention on the Arab Spring, but it has tended to involve sets of questions which are in many ways different to the analyses of the above movements – the latter tend to revolve around counter-hegemonic attempts against austerity in the conditions of liberal democratic national contexts, and the latter work with struggles against authoritarian governments.
7 In contrast to the anti-populist academic communities of political science and the democratisation literature, which have generated a much higher number of analyses of CEE's 'populism' (see the previous section of this chapter).

References

Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
Ágh, A. (2014). Decline of democracy in East-Central Europe: The last decade as the lost decade in democratization. *Journal of Comparative Politics*, 7(2), 4–33.

Ágh, A. (2016). The decline of democracy in East-Central Europe. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 63(5–6), 277–287.

Badiou, A. (2012). *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings*. London and New York: Verso Books.

Balibar, E. (2013) 'A new Europe can only come from the bottom up', *openDemocracy* [Online], May 6.

Beissinger, M. R. and Sasse, G. (2014). An end to 'patience'? The great recession and economic protest in Eastern Europe. In Bermeo, N. and Bartels, L., eds. *Mass Politics in Tough Times*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 334–370.

Bermeo, N. (2016). On democratic backsliding. *Journal of Democracy*, 27(1), 5–19.

Bohle, D. and Greskovits, B. (2007). Neoliberalism, embedded neoliberalism and neocorporatism: Towards transnational capitalism in Central-Eastern Europe. *West European Politics*, 30(3), 443–466.

Canovan, M. (2005). *The People*. Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press.

Carothers, T. (2002). The end of the transition paradigm. *Journal of Democracy*, 13(1), 5–21.

Castells, M. (2015). *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Cirjan, D. (2016). Did it ever happen? Social movements and the politics of spontaneous consensus in post-socialist Romania. *LeftEast* [Online], 4 January.

Crossley, N. (2002). *Making Sense of Social Movements*. Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Dawson, J. and Hanley, S. (2016). The fading mirage of the 'liberal consensus'. *Journal of Democracy*, 27(1), 20–34.

Dean, J. (2012). *The Communist Horizon*. London and New York: Verso Books.

Della Porta, D. (2016). *Where Did the Revolution Go? Contentious Politics and the Quality of Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Diamond, L. (2014). Democracy's deepening recession. *The Atlantic* [Online], 2 May.

Eagleton, T. (1991). *Ideology: An Introduction*. Vol. 9. London: Verso.

Fairclough, N., Jessop, B., and Sayer, A. (2004). Critical realism and semiosis. In: Joseph, J. and Roberts, J. eds. *Realism, Discourse and Deconstruction*. London: Routledge, pp. 23–42.

Fieschi, C., Morris, M. and Caballero, L., eds. (2013). *Populist Fantasies: European Revolts in Context*. Counterpoint [Online].

Gagyi, A. (2015). Why don't East European movements address inequalities the way Western European movements do? A review essay on the availability of movement-relevant research. *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements*, 7(2), 15–26.

Gerrits, A. (2008). Democratic regression, rising populism and the pitfalls of European integration. In Swoboda, H. and Wiersma, J. M., eds. *Democracy, Populism and Minority Rights* [Online]. Austria: Renner Institute, pp. 57–66.

Ghodsee, K. (2008). Left wing, right wing, everything: xenophobia, neo-totalitarianism, and populist politics in Bulgaria. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 55(3), 26–39.

Gramsci, A. (1971). Selections From The Prison Notebooks, Trans. Hoare, Q. and Smith, G.N. eds. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Greskovits, B. (2007). Economic woes and political disaffection. *Journal of Democracy*, 18(4), 40–46.

Greskovits, B. (2015). The hollowing and backsliding of democracy in East Central Europe. *Global Policy*, 6(1), 28–37.

Hanley, S. L. (2014). Two cheers for Czech democracy. *Politologický časopis-Czech Journal of Political Science*, 3, 161–176.

Hanley, S. L. and Sikk, A. (2013). Economy, corruption or promiscuous voters? Explaining the success of Anti-Establishment Reform Parties in Eastern Europe. *ECPR General Conference, Bordeaux, 5–7 September 2013* [Online].

Hardt, M. and Negri, A. (2005). *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*. London: Penguin.

Hardt, M. and Negri, A. (2012). *Declaration*. New York: Argo Navis.

Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and Time*. Trans. Macquarrie, J. and Robinson, E. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Howarth, D., Norval, A. and Stavrakakis, Y. eds. (2000). *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Huntington, S.P. (1991). Democracy's third wave. *Journal of Democracy*, 2(2), 12–34.

Ivancheva, M. (2013a). *The Bulgarian Wave of Protests, 2012–2013*. Council for European Studies [Online].

Ivancheva, M. (2013b). Bulgaria's 'class war': The long-running protests in Bulgaria are not a plot led by middle-class Soros-oids – they are about social alternatives. *The Guardian* [Online], 26 July.

Jacobsson, K., ed. (2015). *Urban Grassroots Movements in Central and Eastern Europe*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.

Jacobsson, K. and Saxonberg, S., eds. (2013). *Beyond NGO-ization: The Development of Social Movements in Central and Eastern Europe*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.

Kaldor, M. and Selchow, S. (2013). The 'bubbling up' of subterranean politics in Europe. *Journal of Civil Society*, 9(1), 78–99.

Katsambekis, G. (2014a). The place of the people in post-democracy researching antipopulism and post-democracy in crisis-ridden Greece. *POSTData* [Online], 19(2), 555–582.

Katsambekis, G. (2014b). 'Populism' against democracy or Europe against itself? Challenging conceptual orthodoxies. In *Populism, Political Ecology and the Balkans: May 23–26* [Online]. Athens: Green Institute Greece, pp. 43–56.

Katsambekis, G. (2014c). The multitudinous moment (s) of the people: Democratic agency disrupting established binarisms. In Katsambekis, G. and Kioupkiolis, A., eds. *Radical Democracy and Collective Movements Today: The Biopolitics of the Multitude versus the Hegemony of the People*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, p. 169.

Katsambekis, G. and Stavrakakis, Y. (2014). Populism, anti-populism and European democracy: A view from the South. In *Populism, Political Ecology and the Balkans: May 23–26* [Online]. Athens: Green Institute Greece, pp. 117–126.

Kioupkiolis, A. and Katsambekis, G., eds. (2014). *Radical Democracy and Collective Movements Today: The Biopolitics of the Multitude versus the Hegemony of the People*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate.

Kofti, D. (2014). Abstention from the Bulgarian protests: Indebted workers and declining market teleology. *FocaalBlog* [Online], 5 November.

Krastev, I. (1999). *Think Tanks and the Invisible Hand of Transition*. National Institute for Research Advancement [Online].

Krastev, I. (2007a). The strange death of the liberal consensus. *Journal of Democracy*, 18(4), 56–63.

Krastev, I. (2007b). The populist moment. *Critika i Humanizum* [Online], 23, 103–108.

Krastev, I. (2008). The strange death of the liberal consensus. In Swoboda, H. and Wiersma, J. M., eds. *Democracy, Populism and Minority Rights* [Online]. Austria: Renner Institute, pp. 67–76.

Krastev, I. (2009). The greengrocer's revenge. *Prospect* [Online].

Krastev, I. (2011). Democracy and dissatisfaction. *Journal of Globalization Studies*, 2(1), 22–31.

Krastev, I. (2013a). *In Mistrust We Trust: Can Democracy Survive When We Don't Trust Our Leaders?* Monterey: TED Conferences Press.

Krastev, I. (2013b). Bulgaria's revolt against consensus. *Project-Syndicate* [Online], 13 March 2013.

Krastev, I. (2013c). Bulgaria, protest for the future. *Open Democracy* [Online], 25 June.

Krastev, I. (2013d). Why Bulgaria's protests stand out in Europe. *The Guardian* [Online], 30 July.

Krastev, I. (2014a). From politics to protest. *Journal of Democracy*, 25(4), 5–19.

Krastev, I. (2014b). *Democracy Disrupted: The Politics of Global Protest*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Kurlantzick, J. (2011). The great democracy melt-down. *Council on Foreign Relations* [Online], 19 May, 12–15.

Laclau, E. (2005). *On Populist Reason*. London: Verso Books.

Malinov, S. (2007). Reflections on Bulgarian populism. *Kritika i Humanizum*, 23, 67–79.

Malinov, S. (2008). Radical demophilia: Reflections on Bulgarian populism. *Eurozine* [Online], 22 January.

Marlière, P. (2013). 'The demophobes and the great fear of populism', *openDemocracy[Online]*, 4 June.

McAdam, D. (1982). *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930–1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

McCarthy, J. D. and Zald, M. N. (1977). Resource mobilization and social movements: A partial theory. *American Journal of Sociology*, 82, 1212–1241.

Medarov, G. (2015). *The Transformations of Liberal Anti-Populism in Post-1989 Bulgaria*. Working Paper Series. Thessaloniki: Populismus [Online].

Mouffe, C. (2000). *The Democratic Paradox*. London: Verso Books.

Mouffe, C. (2005). *On the Political*. London: Routledge.

Mouffe, C. (2013). *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*. London: Verso Books.

Nikolova, M. (2014). The Bulgarian 'creative class' and the reproduction of neoliberal ideology. *CriticAtac* [Online], 16 May.

O'Donnell, G., Schmitter, P. and Whitehead, L. (1986). *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.

Ortiz, I., Burke, S. L., Berrada, M. and Cortés, H. (2013). World protests 2006–2013. *Initiative for Policy Dialogue and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung New York Working Paper* [Online].

Ost, D. (2005) *The Defeat of Solidarity. Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe*. London: Cornell University Press.

Osterweil, M. (2014). Social movements. In Nonini, D. M., ed. *A Companion to Urban Anthropology*. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, pp. 470–486.

Price, C., Nonini, D., and Fox Tree (2008). Grounded utopian movements: subjects of neglect, *Anthropological Quarterly*, 81(1), 127–159.

Rancière, J. (1999). *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Trans. Rose, J. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Rancière, J. (2001). Ten theses on politics. *Theory & Event* [Online], 5(3).

Rancière, J. (2004). *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Trans. Rockhill, G. London: Continuum.

Rancière, J. (2006). *The Hatred of Democracy*. London: Verso Books.

Rancière, J. (2010). The people or the multitudes? In Corcoran, S., ed. *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics: Jacques Rancière*. London and New York: Continuum, pp. 84–90.

Rancière, J. (2013). *The People Are Not a Brutal and Ignorant Mass*. Trans. Lemmey, H. Verso Books [Online], 30 January 2013. Available from: https://goo.gl/YYfYk2 [Accessed 28 May 2016].

Rupnik, J. (2007). From democracy fatigue to populist backlash. *Journal of Democracy*, 18(4), 17–25.

Sakwa, R. (2012). Modernisation, neo-modernisation, and comparative democratisation in Russia. *East European Politics*, 28(1), 43–57.

Severin, A. (2008). The transition from democracy to populism. In Swoboda, H. and Wiersma, J. M., eds. *Democracy, Populism and Minority Rights* [Online]. Austria: Renner Institute, pp. 101–110. Available from: https://goo.gl/J31MiZ [Accessed 14 May 2016].

Smilov, D. and Krastev, I. (2008). The rise of populism in Eastern Europe: Policy paper. In Mesežnikov, G., Gyárfášová, O. and Smilov, D., eds. *Populist Politics and Liberal Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe*. Working Paper Series [Online]. Bratislava: IVO (IPA), pp. 7–12. Available from: https://goo.gl/YjyzuB [Accessed 13 May 2016].

Snow, D. A. and Benford, R. D. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 611–639.

Stavrakakis, Y. (2004). Antinomies of formalism: Laclau's theory of populism and the lessons from religious populism in Greece. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 9(3), 253–267.

Stavrakakis, Y. (2013). The European populist challenge. *Annals of the Croatian Political Association*, 10(1), 25–39.

Stavrakakis, Y. (2014). The return of 'the people': Populism and anti-populism in the shadow of the European crisis. *Constellations*, 21(4), 505–517.

Swoboda, H. and Wiersma, J. M., eds. (2008). *Democracy, Populism and Minority Rights*. Renner Institute [Online].

Tichindeleanu, O. (2017). Romania's protests: From social justice to class politics. *CriticAtac* [Online], 27 February.

Tilly, C. (1995). Contentious repertoires in Great Britain, 1758–1834. In: Traugott, M. ed. *Repertoires and Cycles of Contention*. Durham: Duke University, pp. 15–42.

Tismăneanu, V. (1998). *Fantasies of Salvation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tsoneva, J. and Medarov, G. (2013). Resign!: Bulgaria's protests need a better slogan than that. *The Guardian* [Online], 27 November.

Tsoneva, J. and Medarov, G. (2014). *The Rise of the Rhizomatic Party Form* [Online].

Zarycki, T. (2009). The power of the intelligentsia. The Rywin Affair and the challenge of applying the concept of cultural capital to analyze Poland's elites, *Theory and Society*, 38(6), 613–648.

Zarycki, T. (2014). Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe. BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies. Number 96. Oxon: Routledge.

Zizek, S. (1994). The spectre of ideology. In Zizek, S., ed. *Mapping Ideology*. London: Verso Books, pp. 1–33.Zizek, S. (2012). *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously*. London and New York: Verso.

3 Classificatory struggles and civil society through the lens of Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Bloch's theory of ideology and utopia

The key problem posed in this book is how to understand the antagonisms which transpired *within* the popular protest mobilisations of recent years in Bulgarian specifically and in Central and Eastern Europe more generally. As discussed in the Introduction, it is a research case study of the Bulgarian 2013 protests that informed the theoretical model presented in this book. The centrality in the conflicts of 2013 of questions of *class, culture, civil society* and of discursive practices problematising the *past* and imagining the *future*, provided the empirical pointers for the construction of a conceptual framework that was able to read these in a systematic and contextually informed manner, and thus produce an account of the events that is able to explain, rather than just describe, the conflicts which riddled these and other mobilisations in the region. A theory of political power and struggle which successfully weaves together frameworks for the study of class, culture and politics, and which possesses the capacity to situate and interpret these in light of the particular historic-contextual conjuncture of recent protest events, was found in Antonio Gramsci's work on hegemony, as well as in Ernst Bloch's work on the interconnection between ideology and utopia. In very broad terms, Gramsci's work is particularly useful in guiding this book's endeavour to capture issues of both class and culture, as well as their inter-dynamic in the field of politics and ideology.

There are four main ways in which Gramsci's theory of hegemony can be tremendously valuable in informing a theoretical framework able to address the protest mobilisations in the posts-socialist space. First, Gramsci's (1971) concept of *hegemony* emphasises the importance of the *social-cultural* dimension of the operation of ideology (and, with this, the centrality of *language*). As opposed to the more class reductionist accounts of the (orthodox) Marxist approaches which identify ideology with classes, Gramsci's 'hegemony' – the imposition of ideology through *cultural domination* – is what ensures the maintenance of the social order. Secondly, Gramsci's analysis of hegemonic relationships produces a complex account of the system of institutions and apparatuses through which the former operate, which he conceptualises as *civil society*. That is, for him civil society is the material arena in which hegemonic relationships are played out. He exposes these hegemonic apparatuses via a detailed description of the complex interactions among individuals, social groups and

institutions in civil society, a crucial element of which is the group of the *intellectuals* who have the principle control over the dissemination of ideology. Thirdly, unlike post-Marxist and post-structuralist accounts which dominate the New Left approaches discussed in the previous chapter, Gramsci's conceptualisation of power is less severely detached from what the former call 'inner essentialist core' of Marxism (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). To him, the subject is partly constituted by the objective economic conditions, rather than articulated entirely autonomously in the political realm. Because such an ontological conception allows him to accord due recognition of class positions and relations, Gramsci is further able to analyse struggles in the arena of civil society as *class* struggles. Finally, Gramsci's theory offers a conceptual apparatus that accords due emphasis on the complex operation of *power* not only as imbricated with the manufacture of consent that *sustains the social order*, but also in the form of *struggle to alter established oppressive relationships*. Through his two sets of distinctions: between 'common sense' and 'good sense', and 'normative' versus 'spontaneous' grammar, he places much greater emphasis on questions of subjectivity, agency and power of the powerless, than many of the New Left approaches to collective mobilisations which draw on structuralist and post-structuralist thought.

The first part of this chapter will then explore in detail these four main elements of Gramsci's theory of power – that is, his emphasis on both *culture* and on *class*, his complex institutional analysis of *civil society* and his focus on human *agency* in political struggle. In the second part of the chapter, I will expand and develop further these four elements of his theory in order to construct a theoretical framework that is better equipped to address post-socialist mobilisations. That is, first, I am going to build on Gramsci's emphasis on culture and class (first and third elements listed previously) as both determining hegemonic relations of either consent or struggle, adding a particular focus on classificatory struggles as part of inter-class struggle in contexts of dynamic class formation such as the post-socialist period. To this end, I shall take a clue from Zarycki's (2015) application of a Weberian distinction between the economic logic of *class* and the logic of *rank* defined in terms of cultural capital. Secondly, I shall build on Gramsci's focus on agency in political (class) struggle which, I will argue, he only briefly and vaguely conceptualised as 'good sense' (as opposed to 'common sense'), by introducing an analytical tool that is more fully capable of capturing the 'kernel of truth' which drives people to collectively mobilise to change a given power configuration – that is, the concept of utopian surplus. The same way Gramsci believed that in the mystifying fog of the subalterns' 'common sense' there resided a kernel of 'good sense', Ernst Bloch argued that there always existed a kernel of *utopian surplus* at the core of every ideology. It is then primarily with Bloch's conceptualisation of utopia that I complement this book's theoretical framework in order to capture the group experiences and partisan aspirations which mobilised different protesting groups during what were perceived as revolutionary times pregnant with the possibility for social change.

Culture, class, civil society and agency in the work of Antonio Gramsci

The significance of culture: the concept of hegemony

For Antonio Gramsci, bourgeois ideology and ideologies generally should not be considered in terms of illusions and mere 'appearance'; they are rather an objective and effective reality, and the terrain on which they reside – the terrain of 'super-structures' (Gramsci 1971: 20–22, 235). Not unlike post-Marxist perspectives, then, Gramsci substituted the notion of ideology as the organisation of ideas imposed via a 'false consciousness', with the idea of hegemony as a form of moral and intellectual leadership, whereby the wider population understands their own interests as being fundamentally compatible with those of the hegemonic social group (see Buttigieg 1995). And that, on its part, is what grants the latter legitimacy to hold state power. In this way, by accepting the dominant class' values and beliefs, subaltern[1] classes help reproduce the former's continued domination – "repression is replaced by inculcation" (Moen 1998: 13). Whilst other Marxists understood ideology as a 'false consciousness' or deception based on ignorance, Gramsci suggested that the latter may explain why individuals hold views that are at odds with their own experiences and lives, but it cannot explain why whole groups of people adopt such positions. Using the concept of 'hegemony', as well as based on his earlier work on linguistics,[2] Gramsci carried out a cultural and political analysis of how ruling classes are able (or unable) to impose their visions of the world that do not represent subaltern classes, and through this maintain their dominant position. In this way, he gave cultural and ideological factors a 'rela-tively autonomous' weight (Donald and Hall 1986). Gramsci further argued that it is through the multiple channels (apparatuses) of civil society that hegemonic ideas and values get imposed.

Civil society as a site of cultural domination and class struggle

The idea of civil society has a long history, but it gained particular traction after 1989. Liberals and neo-liberals after 1989 understood it as the realm of society free from the control of government. Thus, in the 1990s it became a convenient term to conceptualise the supposed freedom of capitalist democracy and hence to promote it as key to the development of the post-socialist region. For Gramsci, on the other hand, civil society is far from a neutral site of freedom; instead, it is the very sphere wherein hegemonic (class) struggle takes place, particularly during what he called 'organic crises'.

Gramsci developed his political analysis of hegemony precisely through the detailed study of civil society (Buttigieg 1995), and his descriptions of the com-plex interactions among social groups and institutions in civil society represent a concrete, material exposition of the apparatuses and operations of hegemony. Civil society is then the site of hegemony, the material arena in which in times of normal (non-crisis) politics, the ruling class reinforces its power by nonviolent

means (ibid.) – that is, by manufacturing social consent. During what Gramsci called *organic crises* on the other hand – when the hegemonic position of the dominant class is challenged by rising classes[3] – this material ensemble of hegemonic apparatuses in civil society becomes the sphere of hegemonic *contestation* between different classes, or the arena of social struggle, whereby the dominant class attempts to protect and re-assert its hegemonic position. Empirically, then, Gramsci saw civil society in Western capitalist societies as a guardian ('a sturdy structure') protecting the prestige and legitimacy of bourgeois (pro-capitalist) ideology – hegemony here involved the ideological subordination of the working class by the bourgeoisie, which enabled it to rule by consent. It is essentially the 'strategic nexus of civil society' thus that seems to maintain capitalist hegemony within a political democracy, where state institutions do not directly repress the masses (Anderson 1977: 27). In this sense, for Gramsci, civil society is not the sphere of political freedom, as it is seen in liberal theory, but that of hegemony. Yet, it acquires liberatory potential during 'organic crises'.

The significance of class: inter-class struggle on the terrain of civil society

To theorise the hegemonic struggles during such organic crises, Gramsci uses the military terms '*war of manoeuvre*' and '*war of position*' (1971: 238–239). The first he defines as a frontal attack on state power, and the second as comprising political processes *in preparation* for the war of manoeuvre, which amounts to a sort of cultural/intellectual struggle where one class pursues hegemony by establishing its own 'common sense' over other contenders for hegemony. The site of this positional warfare is civil society. Gramsci was convinced that in Western capitalist societies, where there is a strong civil society akin to a 'trench system' (ibid.: 235) protecting capitalist power, the cultural struggle to gain the active consent of the masses required such 'war of position' to precede any outright affront on state power (i.e. war of manoeuvre). The key role in this manufacture of social consent and in the waging of such 'war of position' is played in society by the group of intellectuals.

THE ROLE OF INTELLECTUALS

Hegemony is achieved through consent (rather than coercion), but it is neither spontaneously given, nor the result of 'free choice', it is rather manufactured; and the power to generate consent is unevenly distributed in society – not everyone is in an equal position to 'see through' it (Buttigieg 2002). This power to manufacture consent is particularly concentrated in the hands of the 'intellectuals'. The role of the intellectuals, or the '*intelligentsia*', in hegemonic struggles for social change is particularly crucial to any attempt to study the political and social orders in Eastern Europe (see Bozoki 1999; Eyal, Szelenyi and Townsley 2000). For Gramsci, civil society designated the modalities by which intellectuals connected to different classes and class-fractions in competition for the active and passive consent of the wider population (Rehmann 2013: 136). Thus Gramsci's theory of

ideology can partly also be seen as a theory of the intellectuals – the 'ideological panorama' of an epoch is constructed (and transformed) by them (Rehmann 2007: 220). He distinguishes between two types of intellectuals – 'organic' and 'traditional'. Traditional intellectuals are those who present themselves as autonomous and independent of the dominant social group (Gramsci 1971: 7) but who effectively function as intellectuals of the dominant social group. 'Organic' intellectuals, on the other hand, are formed 'organically' as the dominant social group rises to power. It is important to note that the 'organic' character of intellectuals comes from the degree to which they are bound to a specific social group, not solely in terms of class origins, but rather in terms of the *relationship between ideas they put forth and their position within society – real and aspired for* (Ives 2004). In other words, the 'organic' quality of intellectual activity is related to how people justify the way a given society is organised and their role in that organisation. The knowledge produced by intellectuals serves to inform and organise, contributing to the development of the hegemonic project of the day. By creating a hegemonic conception of the 'general interest', intellectuals help present a specific ideology in universal terms. More specifically, this is achieved by naturalising particular interests – the "rules and practices and ideologies of a hegemonic order conform to the interests of the dominant power while having the appearance of a universal natural order" (Cox and Sinclair 1996: 243). And by constructing specific ways of thinking and behaviour as 'prestigious' and 'attractive', intellectuals are able to invite 'spontaneous' support for these.

Intellectuals in this sense offer a 'trench system that sustains' the dominant class' hegemony, utilising hegemonic apparatuses within civil society in order to impose the latter's interests and ideologies, formulated as the 'common/general interest' and presented as 'attractive' and 'prestigious'. Consequently, 'intellectual and moral leadership' acquires the "same energy as a material force" (Marx, cited by Gramsci 1971: 377) – in order to ensure the reproduction of social relations which are in line with the dominant class' interests. During 'organic crises' when the hegemonic position of the dominant class's hegemony gets challenged in a 'war of position', it is then the intellectuals' role to fight off the revolutionary assault. It is thus in such times of re-negotiation of dominant and dominated positions, such as the recent period of political protest mobilisations in Bulgaria and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, that the discourses of the intellectuals need to be studied critically.

The agency of the dominated

Gramsci analysed the dynamics of this process of ideological inculcation and reproduction not just in objective terms, within the 'material' sphere of civil society by intellectuals as key agents, but also in subjective terms (in the domain of subjective experience), by looking at the dynamics of what he called 'the common sense'. His work in this direction is part of his overall expansion of the study of ideology (and of politics in general) in the form of a contention that ideology is not only about philosophy (as the study of ideas). Apart from (political) thought of highly systematic or doctrinal form, ideology, he argued, "needs to include the common sense,

everyday conceptions of the world, which do not necessarily carry any of the grand labels, but which form the basis of practical political consciousness" (Donald and Hall 1986). In other words, the study of ideology thus also needs to consider the fragmentary, episodic, often contradictory and incomplete patterns of thought which ordinary people use in everyday life to make sense of the political and social world (ibid.), which he conceptualised as 'the common sense'.

Essentially, Gramsci understood the efficacy of the hegemonic apparatuses in terms of an exploitation of the 'incoherences of common sense'. The common sense is 'the spontaneous philosophy of the multitude' (1971: 421), which is a fragmentary result of the sedimentation of ideas and beliefs elaborated by various intellectuals, who are organically related to other social groups with different experiences and positions in society. Apart from being fragmentary, the common sense also often fails to correspond sensibly to people's own lives and experiences:

> The active man-in-the-mass has a practical activity, but has no clear theoretical consciousness of his practical activity, which nonetheless is an understanding of the world in so far as it transforms it. His theoretical consciousness can indeed be historically in opposition to his activity. One might almost say that he has two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness): one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow-workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one, superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed. But this 'verbal' conception is not without consequences. It attaches one to a specific social group, it influences moral conduct and the direction of will, with varying efficacy but often powerfully enough to produce a situation in which the contradictory state of consciousness does not permit of any action, any decision or any choice, and produces a condition of moral and political passivity.
>
> (Gramsci 1971: 333)

Examples of such discrepancies, Gramsci argued, are between words and deeds, 'intellectual choice' and 'real activity', and generally between a consciousness which unites men in their capacity for "the practical transformation of the real world", and on the other hand a consciousness which man "had inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed" (ibid.: 326). Such contradictory thought forms harbour the danger of precluding any action and decision (Rehmann 2013), and thus lead to 'moral and political passivity'. In this sense, Gramsci understood ideology's relationship with the common sense as one of exploitation, resulting in the *reproduction of social order* (in service to the ideologues).

Gramsci's work, however, also considers (better than other scholars of ideology critique do) the capacity of the dominated to understand and contest the conditions of their existence. To Gramsci, unlike to proponents of ideology critique who subscribe to the 'false consciousness' explanation of the operation of ideologies, *the dominated knowingly and willingly, through consent, participate in their domination* (see also Burawoy 2012). Instead of delusion and misrecognition,

Gramsci speaks of a rational consent to domination, which is based on a fragmented and internally contradicting 'common sense'. Yet, the common sense further harbours a kernel of 'good sense' – that is, practical activity that can lead to genuine understanding:

> Critical understanding of self takes place therefore through a struggle of political 'hegemonies', from opposing directions, first in the ethical field and then in that of politics, in order to arrive at the working out at a higher level of one's own conception of reality.
>
> (Gramsci 1971: 333)

Thus, rather than seeing dominated people as unconsciously accepting of the world as it is, Gramsci sees the practical activity of collectively transforming the world as the basis of good sense, and potentially leading to class consciousness. In other words, the 'common sense' is not simply a penumbra of bad sense. Instead, different classes have different potentials of developing good sense – that is, to develop insight into the world they inhabit. It is the working class that Gramsci grants its kernel of truth which opens the door to intellectuals who can then elaborate that truth through dialogue. What research focus on the subjective work of hegemony helps study then is the context of ideologies' capacity to form and re-form common sense to be able to "organise human masses and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc." (Gramsci 1971: 377).

A further analytical distinction he proposes to approach issues of 'mystification' and 'truth' in social actors' subjective understanding of the social world is that between 'normative' and 'spontaneous' grammar. As discussed earlier, during organic crises, inter-class hegemonic struggles form part of 'positional' warfare, with each contending class aiming to attract more people on their side. Here Gramsci argues that positional warfare for progressive change should result in the formation of what he calls the *national-popular collective will*, which is based on good rather than common sense. In many ways, Ives (2004) argues, the national-popular collective will characterise the differing types and degrees of hegemony. It is only when rising classes are committed to altering people's beliefs and identities through the creation of a 'collective will' which transcends corporate interests and becomes universal that revolutionary changes can take place. Otherwise, Gramsci, argued, what we witness is *'passive revolution'*. Two other concepts from Gramsci's linguistic writings[4] help us further shed more light over his conceptualisation of human agency in class struggle: *normative grammar* and *spontaneous grammar*. The former he defines as the set of language rules that are 'appropriate' and 'proper'; normative grammars are produced through the organisation and legitimization of certain grammars. Spontaneous grammar, on the other hand, refers to those patterns we follow while speaking that are unconscious and seem natural (Ives 2004). Utilising these two as metaphors for the varying degree of hegemony over people's common sense, Gramsci suggests that if a hegemonic class imposes a normative grammar that is external to people's previous language and life (political) experience, it is only likely to lead to a 'passive revolution':

one that fails to engage the 'masses' and result in continued pressures from the underlying grammars, moral reasoning and worldviews that the rising class failed to engage (Ives 2004: 104–106).

It is important to note, however, that Gramsci does not use 'normative grammar' and 'spontaneous grammar' as a negative and a positive concept respectively. Spontaneous grammar is far from being 'free' and 'non-alienated', and normative grammar is not necessarily a form of control and domination in Gramsci's work (ibid.). Previous normative grammars have exerted influences and left traces on how we organise our language, thoughts and impressions (akin to what Bloch described as nonsynchronicity [discussed later] and Gramsci referred to as the "incoherences of the common sense"). Thus, spontaneous grammars are in practice the historical outcome of an interaction of older normative grammars that have been internalised. "Rather than take these spontaneous grammars as some sort of source of free will or sincerity", then, Ives (2004) argues, we need to trace their history and, in Gramsci's words, compile an inventory. Armed with the conceptual tools of 'normative' and 'spontaneous' grammars (as part of an overall understanding of practical political thought in terms of an incoherent 'common sense'), it becomes much easier to understand the fragmented and internally-contradictory discourses of Bulgaria's Winter and Summer protests, as well as of Romania's and Hungary's similarly internally contradicting protest discourses – all of which, as we will see later in this book, exhibit odd mixtures of 'spontaneous' and 'normative' grammars which bear both ideological and utopian elements.

The incoherences of Gramsci's 'common sense' and Bloch's non-contemporaneity

Such imposition of ideas that are incongruent with the interests and life experiences of subaltern groups becomes possible, Gramsci argues, only because the 'common sense' is fraught with contradictions or 'incoherences'. Rehmann (2013: 128) argues that Gramsci's common sense could be compared to a "quarry consisting of several layers of different geographical periods deposited upon each other" (where the 'layers' are the raw materials worked on by ideological apparatuses and ideologues). In this, Gramsci's approach is in some ways akin to the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch's (1991) proposal that there are historic discrepancies – contradictions of '*non-contemporaneity*': social strata, he argued, may be sociological contemporaries, but not temporal contemporaries – their consciousness may contain ways of thinking (and utopian desires) rooted in a past time. Such antagonistic thought forms he found between peasants and middles classes, urban and rural populations, young and old, and so on. Social and cultural structures of the past "continue to flourish in the present alongside contemporary capitalist ones and those pregnant with the future" (Bloch 1991: xii).

There are, however, even more ways in which Gramsci's focus on the ideological investment in (and occupation of) common sense can be fruitfully coupled with Ernst Bloch's general focus on the role of utopian elements in the appeal of (and hence consent to) ideologies. Although he accords due recognition of

the power, agency and subjectivity of the dominated, Gramsci seems to still be preoccupied with a view of the function of ideology as one of reproduction of the (bourgeois) social order (via the hegemonic apparatuses exploiting the incoherences in the common sense). To be able to grasp the ideological constructions inherent to the class struggles in the post-socialist space, however, a stronger focus on social change, rather than reproduction, is required. That is, a focus on ideology's mobilisational force, rather than its endurance capacities, on the manufacture of consent for *change* rather than for *maintenance* is necessary. The entire period after 1989 is marked by significant dynamics of large-scale social change. The region's post-socialist transition to a (neo-) liberal-capitalist establishment was a *new* political project which required the construction of a new political agenda; the multiplicity of projects for social change articulated by different groups in Bulgaria's 2013 protests, in Romania's anti-corruption mobilisations of 2015 and 2017, or in Hungary's and Macedonia's anti- as well as pro-government protest rallies in recent years, also entailed the operation of ideology as part of projects of social change, rather than maintenance of an established order. This is to say, to study the construction of newly emergent ideological constructions (how they gain support), a stronger focus on studying their *mobilisational appeal*, rather than just their mechanisms for reproduction, is needed. To help lay bare the mechanisms through which the newly emerging neoliberal ideological construction of civil society was able to win the 'hearts and minds' of vast sections of the East European in general and the Bulgarian population in particular (i.e. to win hegemonic power) in the first decade after 1989 (Chapter Four), and then its challenge and re-assertion in the protests of recent years (Chapters Five and Six), I shall draw on the conceptualisation of the role of utopia in hegemonic (class) struggles.

Class, ideology and utopia

At its base utopia involves the imagination of a better future as set against an unsatisfactory present, since the point of reference for any given utopia is the social reality as experienced in the present (Levitas 1989). In this sense, the contents of a utopia tend to reflect the salient problematic structures and practices of its time, responding to them in some way. In the words of Levitas (1989), "Utopias reach beyond existing circumstances, but in such a manner that they nevertheless remain informed by them"; or in Bauman's (1976: 14) words, "[Utopias] seldom raise their eyes very high above the level of current reality; they are, indeed, surprisingly realistic in their drawing from the experience and the cravings of their contemporaries, and in their penchant for singling out this or the other established institution as a vehicle of desired change".

Along those lines, some New Left scholars of utopia, many of whom following Ernst Bloch, have emphasised the *functionality* of the utopian impulse and its role in social transformation rather than utopia's formal or generic characteristics (e.g. see Levitas 1990, 2013; Moylan and Baccolini (2007); Geoghegan 1987, 2004; Bauman 1976). In this approach, utopias are seen not only as intrinsically critical

of present reality, but also as split along the very cleavages that characterise social reality's conflictual relations. In the words of Bauman (1976: 15):

> Utopias split the shared reality into a series of competing projects-assessments . . . In so far as the society consists of groups differentiated by an unequal share of available goods as well as by unequal access to the means of social action – including the ability to act critically – all criticism of the present is inevitably committed.

Utopias then need not (any longer) be seen as phantasies of ideal places or forms of social organisation; but as manifestations of prevalent social and ideological conflicts (Gardiner 1992); instead of totalising and monistic, they can be seen as decentred and aporetical (Hudson 2013). In other words, utopia emerges in a group-specific form, reflecting disparate (and often contradictory) group experiences and partisan aspirations, in this way helping to mobilise social groups with respect to desired trajectories of social change (Gardiner 1992). This comes to suggest that the study of utopia can help reveal the major divisions of interest within a society: "[B]y exposing their link to the predicament of various groups, utopias reveal also their class-committed nature" (Bauman 1976: 15).

The critique of ideology through uncovering its utopian seed: the work of Ernst Bloch

Like Gramsci, the utopian Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch offered a model of ideology critique that was different from mainstream perspectives on ideology: rather than interpreting dominant ideology primarily as instruments of mystification and error, and contrasted to either reality (early Marx) or science (e.g. orthodox Marxism), he developed instead a sophisticated conception of ideology as harbouring a utopian kernel of authentic and progressive human desire. Fundamentally, Bloch argues that ideological constructs cannot be ideological without simultaneously being implicitly or explicitly utopian as well, or as Jameson (1979) summarises: "they cannot manipulate unless they offer some genuine shred of content as a fantasy bribe to the public about to be so manipulated". That is to say, ideology and utopia "grow out of the same soil, and interpenetrate" (Geoghegan 2004: 128) – ideologies cater to human longings, dreams, hopes, and fears, whilst exploiting and distorting the utopian potential of these. As Geoghegan (2004: 130) argues, if ideologies were merely falsifications, they would be ineffective and transitory; instead, they need the resources of the utopian impulse to make them politically powerful.

Bloch's three-volume *The Principle of Hope* written in the 1930s argued that the utopian impulse is fundamental to the human experience. Yet, in its articulation, it imagines the means of its fulfilment, at which it starts to emerge in the ideological forms of the time (Levitas 2005). In all ideologies then, in addition to deceptive and distortive aspects, Bloch saw emancipatory utopian elements: at the same time as holding distortions, mystifications and tools for manipulation, it also harbours

a "utopian residue or surplus that can be used for social critique and to advance political emancipation" (Kellner 1997: 109). It is thus necessary to scan ideologies' utopian contents, teasing out the projections of ideal worlds, to thus be able to recognise what people perceive as amiss in this world and what it is that could bring about a future that is experienced as better (happier and freer) (Kellner 1997), or in Bloch's (1986: 12) words: "[U]topian consciousness wants to look far into the distance, but ultimately only in order to penetrate the darkness so near it of the just lived moment". In short, utopia in Bloch's account captures our daydreams and anticipations of alternative (desired) possibilities against which the present's existing reality is measured (Levy 1997).

Furthermore, as Levitas (2005) notes, Bloch challenges the dichotomy between the real and the imagined. To him, utopia is a form of *anticipatory consciousness*. His key concept is the *Not Yet*, carrying the double sense of *not* – highlighting current absence, but also *yet* – alluding to expected presence in the future (ibid.). However, what is not yet is also real, since reality for Bloch encompasses future possibilities, those that constitute a potential. He further maintained that these projections do not present themselves only in the future – history is full of still-valid utopian traces. Or, as Zizek (2005) puts it, the world we live in abounds with past unrealised possibilities which continue to be present today in the form of alternative (imagined) versions of reality (that is, reality is occasionally experienced as less real than 'what might have been'). This can be tremendously helpful in conceptualising the collective elaboration of memory, of both before and after 1989, in the discourses of protesters today. The sense of a betrayed revolution, or a betrayed 'transition', permeated a large part of the protest discourse in both the Winter and the Summer Bulgarian mobilisations, as well as in the Romanian protests. We can use this Blochian suggestion – that history stores utopian impulses and the past continues to have a utopian charge – to think of these protest mobilisations as inextricably hinged on some groups' utopian impulses of 1989, and on the painful disillusionment, or betrayal of the 1989 revolutionary potential, during the ensuing 'transition' with its liberal-technocratic consensus. This suggests thinking of these protests in terms of the continued presence of the past in the present and its force on the imagined alternative futures. That is to say, we have been witnessing in recent years an eruption of popular energy which seeks to restore justice, by casting the transition victors' narratives down and redeeming its losers' political power.

Similarly to Gramsci, Bloch sometimes located ideology in non-revolutionary times, identifying its function in the reproduction of the current social order (Gramsci did this through the elaboration of the concept of hegemony): utopian 'embellishments' would serve ideologies in deceiving individuals into believing that the present society has already realised (utopian) ideals; utopian elements would have mystificatory function and hence serve to legitimate and thus reproduce the social order. (For Gramsci, this mystification comes in the form of presenting current values and norms as universal, rather than particularistic.) But if Gramsci failed to offer a fully developed analytical tool through which an analysis of the operation of the 'good sense' worked in times of revolutionary change, that is in collective mobilisation for progressive change, Ernst Bloch offered the

concept of *utopian surplus* as such an analytical tool that can be used to uncover the 'good sense' in the operation of power domination and struggle against it. Bloch's theory accounted for such a function of utopia – related to change rather than reproduction, which he conceptualised as a 'utopian surplus' that appears in revolutionary times – often when a new class, which criticises the previous order, rises by projecting new trajectories for social change (in Bloch's analysis – when the bourgeoisie attacked the feudal order for its lack of individual freedom, rights, democracy, and class mobility). It is precisely Bloch's focus on utopian traces in rising ideologies in revolutionary times of social change that is what makes his account particularly relevant to the focus of this book.

Yet, it is also important to note that the task of separating the progressive from the conservative, the good sense from the common sense, the utopian surplus from the ideological fog, is a very tricky endeavour. Thus, when studying utopias in this approach it is important to recognise (following Ernst Bloch) that utopian impulses are not necessarily wed to 'progressive' politics, since in this approach utopia and ideology are intertwined and no longer subject to the neat distinction Karl Mannheim (1936) for example drew between the former as progressive and the latter as reactionary. This is also why, this book argues, it is important not to separate 'discourses' the way many radical democratic approaches have done by separating 'right-wing populism' from 'left-wing populism', as if these exist in a free-floating socio-cultural space, and are neatly articulated by specific groups (right-wing populists vs. left-wing populists) without the possibility for incoherent, internally contradicting, hybridisation within one and the same social group's (and of course individual's) 'common sense'. Thus the specific class conditions, historical experiences (specifically of the post-1989 period) of these individuals and groups, as well as their imaginaries for alternative social orders and the hierarchies these envisage, need to constitute an important part of any analysis of social struggles in the region today. An analysis that in this way accounts for the *structural* relations of power (such as class) when studying political articulations is in a much stronger position to explain the often incoherent and fragmented hybrid political identities and articulations which, as the rest of this book will demonstrate, emerged after 1989 and transpired clearly in more recent struggles.

Class and culture in the post-socialist context: a theoretical synthesis

Apart from informing an ontological and epistemological concern with agency, the point I made earlier (as well as in the previous chapter) regarding the importance of considering the material conditions of social agents articulating themselves to particular political positions also highlights the need to pay closer attention to the political economy of the mobilisations, and specifically to the question of class. As discussed earlier, Gramsci, unlike many structuralist and post-structuralist scholars, does not eschew a focus on the economy and on class, despite his major contribution to the theory of ideology being his emphasis on the 'superstructure'. Before I move on to develop this focus further, however, I propose to incorporate in the theoretical framework developed thus far a set of concepts borrowed from

the post-Marxist and post-structuralist discourse theory (DT), whilst rejecting the concepts' constructionist base as developed in DT.

Discourse vs. material reality in critical discourse analysis and in discourse theory: the concept of 'articulation'

Many of the critical studies of political struggle (or of 'populism') have been carried out from structuralist and post-structuralist (postmodern) perspectives inspired by the many 'linguistic turns'. One of the most prominent frameworks for the study of political struggle is Discourse Theory (DT), and specifically Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's (1985) work. At its base, DT is a combination of post-Marxist social thought and post-structuralist linguistics. As post-Marxists Laclau and Mouffe critique the strict Marxist division between material economic conditions (the economic base) and the meaning-producing cultural and political institutions of the state and civil society (the superstructure). If orthodox Marxism saw the base as entirely determining of the superstructure (people's consciousness as determined by the economic structure of society), post-Marxist approaches, and particularly that of Gramsci (1971), moderated these claims by also accounting for the importance of discursive practices within the superstructure, wherein, under the influence of ruling classes, popular consent is manufactured to legitimate their dominant position. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) radicalised Gramsci's ideas and collapsed entirely the separation into base and superstructure. For them, the social is a discursive construction, so there is then no 'objective' social reality (and base) which separates people into classes (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002). Instead, social group identities are the outcome of political 'articulation' which can be analysed using discursive tools (ibid.; Rear 2013). In this way, although they recognise the existence of an external reality, they claim it is mediated entirely by discourse. The assumptions of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach taken in this book differ from those of DT mostly with regards to the degree to which social reality is recognised as accessible outside of the medium of discourse. Yet, as Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999) have noted, some of the analytical tools proposed by Laclau and Mouffe are compatible with Fairclough's CDA. It is specifically, the concepts of '*articulation*', '*chain of equivalence and difference*' and '*enemy*', which the analysis offered in this book is going to integrate into the critical discourse analytical approach applied to protest discourses here.

The concept of 'articulation' is central for Laclau and Mouffe: it essentially replaces the idea of expression (representation). This helps them eschew a Marxist understanding of class interests as defined economically and expressed on the political terrain. Instead, class interests (and hence class struggle) then become:

> not the expression of a common underlying essence but the result of political construction and struggle. If the working class, as a hegemonic agent, manages to articulate around itself a number of democratic demands and struggles, this is due not to any a priori structural privileges. . . .
>
> (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 65)

Laclau and Mouffe's definition of articulation is "any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice" (1985: 105). Thus, the process of articulation does not involve any sort of 'representation' of structures that already exist – they are instead created anew. The articulatory practice then does not occur in accordance with criteria outside of it, such as 'truth' or 'reality. In other words, discourses for Laclau and Mouffe are not secured by the extra-discursive reality that CDA posits. Instead, discourses are open (not fixed) and unstable: there can only exist partially and temporary fixations of meaning in what they call 'nodal points'. Such partial fixing of meaning also underpins the operation of unity in '*chains of equivalence and difference*' through which subject positions are articulated in the field of politics. Ives (2004: 159) further sees Laclau and Mouffe's conception of chains of equivalence and difference as comparable to Gramsci's analysis of 'spontaneous' and 'normative' grammar, in that both sets of distinctions are used to analyse the structured nature of different political identities and allow a degree of agency (individual and collective). Yet, Ives (2004: 159) argues, "Gramsci's is more clearly aimed at theorising the creation of an alternative 'normative grammar' that can challenge the status quo and effectively address capitalism".

The theoretico-methodological model that this book offers, proposes to integrate discourse theory's notion of 'articulation' into the analytical tools employed to conduct Critical Discourse Analysis, whilst keeping a critical realist (Bhaskar 1978) ontology (and rejecting DT's constructionism). I suggest the concept of 'articulation' does not necessarily have to be entirely detached from the concept of representation, and thus wed to DT's constructionism. I propose instead to use it as a tool to analyse the practice of binding certain class positions to particular political positions, which, however, do not necessarily correspond or match 'objective' class positions. In other words, I aim to use it to account for the contradictory and often hybrid political articulations that I shall describe in Chapters Five and Six. In addition to a Marxist analysis of agents' structural positions and relations, then, an analysis of their political articulations – which might contradict (or not) their material conditions – can be carried out with the help of DT's analytical tool of 'articulation' (whilst eschewing DT's ontological assumptions). Furthermore, to conceptualise the ways in which "antagonisms, which take the form of struggles over the articulation of discursive practices" (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999: 123), I borrow from both DT and CDA the concepts of 'disarticulation' and 're-articulation'. With the help of these, I analyse the ways in which hegemony can be contested and re-negotiated.

Class and culture in the post-socialist context

Armed with the theoretical framework discussed in the preceding pages, it will be my aim in this book to offer a theoretical synthesis that is in a better position to examine the post-socialist cases of protest mobilisations in recent years. Overall, to adapt it to the post-socialist context, the class analysis which forms the core of the theoretical model offered in this book and described later, weaves in together

Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) concept of *cultural capital* and Bloch's theory of the *utopian surplus* in class articulations – within the overall Gramscian analytical framework described at the beginning of this chapter.

In keeping with a Gramscian focus on culture (on the superstructure), I borrow Bourdieu's conception of classes as not reducible to the purely economic, but as containing a combination of economic and cultural capital. Taking a cue from Zarycki's (2015) class analysis of Polish society and from Eyal, Szelenyi and Townsley's (1998) work on class formation in postcommunist Central Europe, I argue that the Bulgarian (as well as the Romanian) society can be seen as exhibiting a dual-stratification order whereby the economic logic of *class* competes with the logic of *rank* defined in terms of cultural capital. But, in contrast to Bourdieu's (1986) view of culture as inhibiting class struggle, I adopt a Gramscian view of the cultural realm as a realm of class struggle.[5] For, within a Gramscian perspective, the war of position, that is the transformation of civil society, is a *struggle for class hegemony in which each class seeks to present its interests as the interests of all*. Thus, instead of asking why and how hierarchies of social class persist (as Bourdieu does), I ask why and how hierarchies of social class are constituted, negotiated and enacted during struggles for social change in the rapidly changing and unstable political environment (organic crisis) of the post-socialist context. This involves attending to both the material and symbolic constitution of these divisions; and specifically within the language of the Bulgaria's 2013 protests, I pay heed to the power of naming, the symbolic violence and performative effects of classificatory and de-classificatory practices.

To approach the specific class divisions that surfaced in 2013, I place a Bourdieuian focus on cultural capital as equally important to economic capital in the analysis of class, and I follow Zarycki (2015), who identifies a 'dual-stratification order' governed by two logics – that of rank (stratification based on cultural capital) and that of class (stratification based on economic capital). In this account, economic or class logic is taken seriously, but it is argued that in the post-socialist region the latter needs to be seen in a relationship of constant competition with rank logic, defined in terms of cultural capital, where the two logics are "much more autonomous than in a typical western society" (Zarycki 2015: 717). I further suggest that the differences can partly be traced to the detachment of political from economic power (since private property did not exist, power was practically political at all times) during the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, compared to the long-established (informal) convergence of the two in Western Europe where accumulation of capital often practically entailed political power (despite the two being by definition separate in a capitalist system).

There is a twofold rationale for adopting such a Weberian distinction, and it is rooted in the specificity of the CEE (and Bulgarian) historical context. Firstly, Bulgaria (as well as the region more generally) was marked by a very rapid historical process of class (trans)formation. As Von Holdt (2012) reminds us, however, the historical formation of classes is not only a material process of accumulation on the one side and dispossession on the other, but also the attendant disturbance of the old symbolic order and formative projects to reconstitute a new symbolic

order with its own new hierarchies and distinctions, and of course conflicts. When elite (and class) formation is a particularly rapid process, such as was the case in Bulgaria both after its independence from the Ottoman Empire (after 1878) and during and after its communist regime (after 1944 and after 1989), the trajectory from subaltern to elite status (and vice versa) can be/has been a rather steep one. A protracted intergenerational process of class formation of a Western sort

> may evolve more discreet or subtle expressions of status and distinction, but a class, or classes that tear themselves forth from the subalterns through such internecine struggles, and in which individuals remain subject to sudden reversals of fortune, necessarily has to rely on more robust, and even brash, assertions of status.
>
> (Von Holdt 2012: 5)

Secondly, a particularly important role in the constitution of such a class/rank stratification order in Eastern Europe (including in Bulgaria) has been, and continues to be, played by the intellectuals. Characterised by the under-development of a Western-style class system, Bulgaria and the region at large practically lacked the national industrial bourgeoisie class formed as part of the Industrial Revolution in the West. Instead of a strong bourgeoisie, a strong intelligentsia class emerged during the country's 'revival' period (nineteenth century), which took on the role of society's cultural and political luminaries, engaged in intellectual and spiritual leadership and thus had a catalyst role in society's progress. This class consisted of Western- or Eastern- (Moscow-) educated individuals who conceived of their role as a messianic duty to 'enlighten the masses' (Penev 1924) and bridged the gap between what they saw as local backward (traditional) habits (engendered by the perceived backwardness of the Ottoman Empire) and the West's European modernity[6] – that is, attempted to "catch up" with the perceived as superior cultural (civilizational) model of Europe (Hristova 2005; Szwat-Gylybowa 2014; Zarycki 2014). During the state socialist regime, the significance and authority of the intelligentsia grew further; they became the moral and cultural vanguard of society (akin to Gramsci's 'moral leadership'), acquiring an almost autonomous class consciousness (Hristova 2005). The popular view of the role of this group after 1989 tends to be that they have lost their status and influence and have been pushed aside by the new politico-economic elites. However, I agree with Szelenyi's contention (see Eyal, Szelenyi and Townsley 1998; Ost 2015) that the post-1989 intelligentsia finds itself in a far less disadvantageous position than is often claimed: many of its 'members' were propelled into dominant positions in state, business and in the new postcommunist civil society network of NGOs, foundations and think-tanks (see, e.g., Lavergne 2010). Thus, in view of the classic Weberian model, the Bulgarian intelligentsia today still appears as a typical status group that is an element of the rank order. In other words, in the conditions of a destabilised symbolic order[7] and uncertainties over the meanings of different markers of status, the intelligentsia has been crucial in establishing the new terms of symbolic violence. This is why the role it appeared to play in the classificatory antagonisms of 2013 will be scrutinised

closely, specifically in light of the theoretical distinction between class and rank discussed previously.

Furthermore, since, like Gramsci, I recognise that these discursive practices of 2013 are keyed around a system of culturally dominant 'leading ideas', which are incoherently and often discordantly lined up in the popular 'common sense', I shall attempt to approach these discursive practices in all their complexity, rather than trying to parse them neatly along a fixed divide between the politically progressive and the politically reactionary. To help me do that, I will use Ernst Bloch's ideas about the interlace of the utopian and the ideological, and apply them to the language of the protests. Within the case study of Bulgaria in this book, I tease out the utopian elements contained in the ideological conflict of the class ('positional') warfare of the protests which seemed to articulate differing and clashing projects for social change. Informed by Bloch's emphasis on the "functionality" of the utopian impulse and its role in social transformation, I attempt to go beyond a descriptive account of the class conflict that generated and was generated by the resounding clash of interests in Bulgarian society in 2013. Thus, I use the concept of utopia as representation of group- (or class-) specific experiences and struggles for social change which, when teased out of ideological articulations, can explain, rather than just describe, how and why ideologies succeed in capturing the minds and hearts of people, and how and why they get contested. In other words, I attempt to tap into the complex interrelationship between ideology and utopia, investigating how given utopian formulations are bound up with antagonistic social and political forces within the particular historical conjuncture of the 2013 political mobilizations.

Notes

1 'Subaltern' (and sometimes 'subordinate') is the term Gramsci uses to describe the dominated classes: "Subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up: only 'permanent' victory breaks their subordination" (1971: 55).
2 Well before he began to elaborate his political theory of hegemony, Gramsci studied the importance of language to politics (Ives 2004). During this earlier work, Gramsci became familiar with the notion of 'hegemony' as it was being used in linguistics, where the concept, along with others, such as 'attraction' and 'prestige', were used to describe the ways language changed and disseminated geographically and socially. These theories of language suggested that language is spread mostly not by (state) coercion, but by speakers embracing the prestige of new languages (Ives 2004). Ives (2004) suggests that this idea of the role of language diffusion among different populations served as an important metaphor in Gramsci's later work when he would attempt to explain political phenomena drawing on the same logic of diffusion.
3 Gramsci argues that while societies regularly experience crises where social movements arise to challenge some aspect of the political, economic or social order, such political struggles unfold only on the 'legal terrain' of power (i.e. through elections and in parliament), whilst maintaining bureaucratic continuity. The real struggle, to Gramsci, only takes place when an *organic* crisis emerges, that is, when political movements with competing visions of the social order clash, effectively challenging the core of the established political, economic and social order together with the social class, or the bureaucratic 'caste' (Gramsci 1971: 246), which maintains it.

4 For a detailed reading of Gramsci's political ideas and concepts in light of his earlier studies in linguistics, see Ives (2004); and for a discussion of normative and spontaneous grammar as political rather than only linguistic notions, see pp. 90–101.
5 See also the discussion of Gramsci's focus on agency at the beginning of this chapter.
6 Particularly at the time, in line with the French, German, as well as Russian cultural models.
7 I do not here use the idea of symbolic order in its original structuralist sense, but in the sense Rehmann uses it: to refer to the meaning-making aspect of hegemonic relations, which also reflects and shapes 'public opinion' (Rehmann 2013: 7).

References

Anderson, P. (1977). The antinomies of Antonio Gramsci. *New Left Review*, 100, 5–78.
Bauman, Z. (1976). *Socialism: The Active Utopia*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
Bhaskar, R. (1978). *A Realist Theory of Science*. 2nd edn. Hassocks: Harvester Press.
Bloch, E. (1977). Nonsynchronism and the obligation to its dialectics. Trans. Ritter, M. *New German Critique*, 11, 22–38.
Bloch, E. (1986). *The Principle of Hope*. Trans. Plaice, N., Plaice, S. and Knight, P. Vol. 1. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
Bloch, E. (1988). *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*. Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press.
Bloch, E. (1991). *Heritage of Our Times*. Trans. Plaice, N. and Plaice, S. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Bloch, E. (1995). *The Principle of Hope*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In Richardson, J., ed. *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*. New York: Greenwood, pp. 241–258.
Bozoki, A. (1999). *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe*. Budapest: Central European University Press.
Burawoy, M. (2012). Cultural domination: Gramsci meets Bourdieu. In Burawoy, M. and Von Holdt, K., eds. *Conversations with Pierre Bourdieu: The Johannesburg Moment*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
Buttigieg, J. A. (1995). Gramsci on civil society. *Boundary*, 22(3), 1–32.
Buttigieg, J. A. (2002). Gramsci on civil society. In Martin, J., ed. *Antonio Gramsci: Marxism, Philosophy, and Politics*. Vol. 2. London: Routledge, pp. 422–449.
Chouliaraki, L. and Fairclough, N. (1999). *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
Cox, R. W. and Sinclair, T. (1996). *Approaches to World Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Donald, J. and Hall, S., eds. (1986). *Politics and Ideology*. Milton Keynes and Philadelphia: Open University Press.
Eyal, G., Szelenyi, I. and Townsley, E. (1998). *Making Capitalism without Capitalists: The New Ruling Elites in Eastern Europe*. London: Verso Books.
Gardiner, M. (1992). Bakhtin's carnival: Utopia as critique. *Utopian Studies*, 3(2), 21–49.
Geoghegan, V. (1987). Marxism and utopianism. *Utopian Studies*, (1), 37–51.
Geoghegan, V. (2004). Ideology and utopia. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 9(2), 123–138.
Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Trans. Hoare, Q. and Smith, G. N., eds. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
Hristova, N. (2005). *The Specifics of the Bulgarian 'Dissidence': Power and Intelligentsia 1956–1989 [Spetsifika na Bulgarskoto 'Disidentstvo'. Vlast i Intelligentsiya 1956–1989]*. Sofia: Letera.

Hudson, W. (2013). Bloch and a philosophy of the proterior. In Thompson, P. and Zizek, S., eds. *The Privatization of Hope: Ernst Bloch and the Future of Utopia*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Ives, P. (2004). *Language and Hegemony in Gramsci*. London: Pluto Press.

Jameson, F. (1979). Reification and utopia in mass culture. *Social Text*, 1, 130–148.

Jørgensen, M. and Phillips, L. (2002). *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. London: Sage.

Kellner, D. (1997). Ernst Bloch, utopia, and ideology critique. In Daniel, J. O. and Moylan, T., eds. *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*. London: Verso Books, pp. 80–95.

Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. (1985). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. London: Verso Books.

Lavergne, D. (2010). *The Experts of the Transition: Bulgarian Think Tanks and the Global Networks of Influence [Ekspertite na prehoda: Bulgarskite think-tanks i globalnite mrezhi za vliyanie]*. Sofia: Iztok-Zapad.

Levitas, R. (1989). Marxism, romanticism and utopia: Ernst Bloch and William Morris. *Radical Philosophy*, 51, 27–36.

Levitas, R. (1990). Educated hope: Ernst Bloch on abstract and concrete utopia. In Daniel, O. J. and Moylan, T., eds. *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*. London: Verso Books, pp. 65–79.

Levitas, R. (2005). The imaginary reconstitution of society: Or why sociologists and others should take utopia more seriously. *Inaugural Lecture, University of Bristol, 24 October 2005* [Online].

Levitas, R. (2013). *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Levy, Z. (1997). Utopia and reality in the philosophy of Ernst Bloch. In Daniel, O. J. and Moylan, T., eds. *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*. London: Verso Books.

Mannheim, K. (1936). *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.

Moen, D. G. (1998). Analysis of social transformative movements in advanced capitalism: A neo-Gramscian approach. *Journal of Policy and Culture*, 3, 117–133.

Moylan, T. and Baccolini, R., eds. (2007). *Utopia Method Vision: The Use Value of Social Dreaming*. Vol. 1. Bern: Peter Lang.

Ost, D. (2015). Class after communism: Introduction to the special issue. *East European Politics and Societies*, 29(3), 543–564.

Penev, B. (1924). Our intelligentsia [Nashata Inteligentsiya]. *Zlatorog*, 1.

Rear, D. (2013). *Laclau and Mouffe's Discourse Theory and Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis: An Introduction and Comparison* [Online].

Rehmann, J. (2007). Ideology theory. *Historical Materialism*, 15(4), 211–239.

Rehmann, J. (2013). *Theories of Ideology: The Powers of Alienation and Subjection*. Historical Materialism. Number 54. Leiden: Brill.

Szwat-Gylybowa, G. (2014). *'Playing Catch-Up': The Notion of Needing to Accelerate a Country's Progress towards a Civilised Paradise: The Bulgarian Version (a Proposed Entry for a Dictionary of Peregrinating Ideas)*. Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences.

Von Holdt, K. (2012). Bourdieu, symbolic order and the 'margin of freedom': Four sketches for a theory of change. In Burawoy, M. and Von Holdt, K., eds. *Conversations with Bourdieu: The Johannesburg Moment*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Zarycki, T. (2014). *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe*. BASEES/Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies. Number 96. Oxon: Routledge.

Zarycki, T. (2015). Class analysis in conditions of a dual-stratification order. *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 29(3), 711–718.

Zizek, S. (2005). Lenin shot at Finland station. *London Review of Books* [Online], 27(16).

4 The concept of civil society during the 'transition'

Its road to hegemony and its utopian surplus

Introduction

The post-socialist transition to a liberal-capitalist establishment in Central and Eastern Europe was a *new* political project which required the construction of a new political agenda. What is more, the neoliberal project's ascendance to hegemony happened in the context of a "heightened sense of social possibilities" (Kumar 1991: 97) when "the alternatives [could] be cast far wider" than people appeared to imagine (Kumar 2001: 32). How is it then that amid all the different alternative courses which East-Europeans could have consented to, there was one particular model – that which Adam Michnik (cited in Gitelman 1990) warned was 'utopian capitalism' or a free market utopia – that they seemed to embrace, and no alternative courses made their way into public debates and into the public imagination? The new liberal political project entered in a historic competition for people's 'hearts and minds', that is, for hegemony: it had to produce a new 'collective will' (Hall 1987) – and it appeared, at least initially, to do so rather effortlessly. To study the ascendance to hegemony of a newly emergent ideological construction, a stronger focus on studying its *mobilisational appeal* rather than just its mechanisms for reproduction, is then required.

In this chapter I offer a case study of the hegemonic establishment of a (neo-) liberal form of civil society in Bulgaria in the period 1988–2012. I carry out a discursive analysis of the changing usage of the concept (as a system of meanings and representation; i.e. its referential/ideational aspect) throughout the period, as part of the changing contours (structures and practices) of the arena in which it developed. Although my focus here falls largely on the Bulgarian case, I draw comparisons to developments in other East European countries and their construction and construal of the idea of civil society after 1989. I attempt to show how, in its pragmatic use, the abstract idea of civil society has had socio-political implications, and simultaneously has been shaped by the socio-political context at the time of the 1989 transformations. I analyse the *modus operandi* of civil society during the period – studying the concept's construction and construal in the early stages of the democratic changes, and its re-conceptualisation and contestation in the later stages of the 'transition' to liberal democracy and market economy. Before I carry out the analysis, I first briefly sketch the historical context of the Bulgarian case in concise terms – offering an overview of the key historical events,

developments and political actors during the period. With this, I aim to situate the broad conceptualisation of 'civil society' in its historical context of political and economic developments during the period. Based on the periodisation I establish in the historical sketch, I then trace the constitution and construal of the 'civil society' concept throughout each period.

Brief historical sketch of key events, and the place of civil society in these

'The Bulgarian 10th November 1989'

The economic difficulties brought about by the gradual break-up of close ties with, and withdrawal of support from, Moscow in the 1980s prompted Todor Zhivkov, the Bulgarian communist leader, to publicly announce a reform programme involving liberalisation and some decentralisation in July 1987. A year earlier, during the 13th Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BKP) the ideas of a 'socialist democracy' and a *'socialist civil society'* entered discussions among party leaders for the first time. The new political reform programme, however, went little further than rhetoric – despite putting the issue of reform on the agenda, Zhivkov was reluctant to give it much substance. At the same time, a reformist faction, aligned to the ideals of Gorbachev's 'perestroika', within the Communist Party's Central Committee, was gaining strength. A growing number of intellectuals also started to openly voice their support for a reformist line. In Bulgaria, as opposed to countries in Central Europe such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, there had been no well-developed reformist wing in BKP and no organised dissident movement outside of it to challenge its power,[1] but some publicly voiced dissent and the first forms of organised resistance started to appear at the beginning of 1988. These were mostly composed of public (and influential) figures – members of the *intelligentsia*, who were mostly also members of the Party or enjoying close ties to it[2] (Kalinova and Baeva 2010). In this context, and despite his rhetoric of reforms and growing internal and external resistance, Zhivkov continued to crack down on signs of public dissent and persisted with a dangerous campaign of assimilation of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. It is frequently argued that it was this policy of reformist rhetoric coupled with conservative action that played a significant role in the developments to follow – the public organisation of opposition movements, and a change in regime leadership. Thus, during 1988 several organisations for the defence of human rights emerged, as well as a Club for the Defense of *Glasnost* and *Preustroistvo*. In February 1989, an independent trade union organisation was created, and in March *Ecoglasnost*, an organisation concerned with environmental issues, was established.

Amid strikes and protest activity among the Turkish population in mid-1989, followed by large public demonstrations over ecological concerns in October and November the same year, Zhivkov was replaced by Politburo member and foreign minister Petur Mladenov on 9th November 1989 – the move was announced the following day, 10th November – the date which came to symbolise

the regime change. In the months after this, two main political factions were now explicit – the first one, represented by BKP and its supporters, was a moderate, '*evolutionist-perestroechna*' line which demanded the reform of the socialist system by integrating elements of democracy and market economy; the second was a '*revolutionary-oppositionist*' line represented by the now visible dissident circles who demanded fast and fundamental changes to sweep the current system away. The latter line, adopted by the new dissidents, was relatively weak as at this early stage they lacked experience and an organised support network (Kalinova and Baeva 2010). In December, these opposition groups came together to form an umbrella organisation, the *Union of Democratic Forces* (UDF), which was to claim for itself an important role during the 'transition', asserting their ambition to lead the political and economic changes, following CEE's programmes of 'shock therapy' and 'decommunisation'. Zhelyu Zhelev – dissident author of the book *Fascism*, for which he was expelled from BKP in the 1960s – became UDF's leader. The founding declaration of UDF listed the following principle general goals: "civil society, political pluralism, multi-party political system, rule of law, and a market economy", as well as seventeen more specific demands (UDF Memorandum of Constitution 1990).

In the meantime, BKP formally discarded the Soviet model and announced it would support a ('softer') reformist course. The new seemingly more reformist party leadership entered Round Table talks with the opposition in January 1990.[3] BKP also changed its name to Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP). With this and from then onwards, it aimed to construct its image as a chaperone of transitional changes too, but at a lower social cost for the population.[4]

1990: the Round Table, the first democratic elections, and the 'City of Truth'

The Round Table, which acquired the status of a body that "expresses the political will of the Bulgarian people" (Kolarova and Dimitrov 2004: 1), produced a "consensus over a series of documents which ratified the foundation of the political system of postcommunist Bulgaria" (Dainov 2000: 350). The Round Table also legitimised personally the new politicians – although many other political organisations mushroomed at the time, it was particularly UDF that was recognised as the legitimate representative of the opposition on a national level (Kalinova and Baeva 2010). Most immediately, the Round Table agreed on elections for Grand National Assembly to take place later in the year. The result of these first democratic elections held in June 1990 was a victory for the Bulgarian Socialist Party. The defeat of the opposition was a shock to its supporters, particularly in larger cities and among the intellectuals. All ex-communist countries in Central Europe to date had seen their opposition formations win elections, so the Bulgarian opposition and its supporters expected the same to happen in Bulgaria. However, although the validity of the results was widely suspected, it was clear that BSP still enjoyed the support of a significant part of Bulgarian citizens. In part, the opposition failed to recognise important historical differences in Bulgarians' and Central

Europeans' attitudes towards the Soviet Union and the political project of social-ism (for example, BKP had a strong influence in Bulgaria before 1944, and Rus-sophile sentiments date back to Bulgaria's National Revival Period, in the eighteenth to nineteenth century). Despite this, the defeat of the UDF seemed to have traumatised opposition supporters – it was perceived as a betrayal of the achievements of 1989. The failure of the opposition in these first elections was also to produce a discourse about the *'Bulgarian people as politically immature, pre-modern and unskilled for self-governance'* – a discourse which would reappear routinely in intellectual and NGO publications, as well as in media generally (Lavergne 2010). I will return to the significance of UDF's loss in the first elections for the later constitution of the idea of civil society in the next section.

Mainly in Sofia, but also in larger cities in the country, the 'shock' of the defeat was enormous (Ivanov 2011: 444) – it triggered a wave of demonstrations, sit-ins and blockades of the capital over the next five months. A tent city dubbed the 'City of Truth' – or a 'communist-free zone' – was set up on the central square by anti-BSP protesters; the University of Sofia was also occupied by students who did not want to see the Socialists in power again. They demanded the president's resignation, as well as 'the truth' about the repressions during the regime, about the authorities' concealment of information about the Chernobyl accident in 1986, about the past of BSP officials who still held important positions in the cabinet, including Prime Minister Andrey Lukanov, and about other suspected 'secrets' or 'offences' of the regime. As a result of this pressure coming from 'the Street', Petur Mladenov, the new president, resigned. This first victory for 'the Street' not only failed to appease the protesters, but further stimulated and radicalised them – the number of protesters increased and their demands broadened.[5] After tension escalated, the police forces cleared the crowds and dismantled the 'City of Truth'. A month later, another significant victory for the opposition took place – Zhelyu Zhelev was elected president by the Grand National Assembly. He was to become a 'central democratic political emblem' (Medarov 2013) of the transition, grounded in his image of a representative, if not a leader, of the opposition against the totalitarian state, and hence a central emblem of 'civil society' (against the state).

The first democratic elections also posed the question of the role of the intel-ligentsia. At the end of Zhivkov's rule and during the first months and years of the transition the intelligentsia played a significant and leading role. This could be seen not only from their dissident activity during the entire year of 1989, but also from the composition of the Grand National Assembly in 1990 which abounded with writers, artists, musicians, film directors and other members of what was known as 'the creative intelligentsia' of the former regime. From the first ordinary national assembly onwards, however, their number decreased – many would later interpret this as the birth of a 'professional political class' (Kalinova and Baeva 2011), and many would lament and point this development as detrimental to the later course of the democratic changes (e.g. Prodanov 2011). In parallel to the diminished vis-ibility and societal influence of these 'traditional' intellectuals, however, another sphere of intellectual activity was quickly gaining ground in these early years of the transformation – that of the 'experts'. This 'new class of experts', based in a

network of newly created 'institutes' and 'centres' (later to be referred to as 'think-tanks'[6]), thrust out the traditional ideological apparatuses linked to the state and the state academic institutes, becoming the main 'interpreters' of current affairs, as well as the key conduit for the legitimation and normalisation of the new dominant language of the transition. This 'clash', or at least rivalry, between the traditional intellectuals and the new organic class of experts peaked in the mid-1990s, and it is now commonly recognised that the 'battle' was won by the latter (e.g. Hristova 2011; Prodanov 2011; Nikolchina 2012). The role of this new class of 'experts' in the constitution of the 'civil society' discourse, is addressed in detail in the second part of this chapter.

1990–1997: instability, transformation of political into economic capital, and an organised 'civil society' against the state

The period that followed the first democratic elections was one of instability, marked by the succession of five democratically elected and four interim governments until 1997. With the first anti-communist government elected in October 1991 – a coalition largely controlled by UDF and headed by pro-reform and pro-American Philip Dimitrov, who also conceived of his role as that of a missionary and his calling (that of '*normalisation*') – the country witnessed the beginning of a major purge of cadres from the old regime. The purge marked the beginning of the process of transformation of the 'ex-communist nomenclature' into what Ost (1996) called the 'new capitalist class' since many former state officials moved to commerce, banking and entrepreneurship, where they could utilise the knowledge and contacts accumulated during their state service.[7] Dimitrov's government also began the process of restitution of property and land. The next government – a coalition which declared itself 'expert' and non-partisan under the premiership of Liuben Berov – continued the economic programme of the previous government and began the first wave of privatisation, which favoured what Ganev (1997: 136) called 'semi-criminal networks'. Amid growing unemployment, inflation, and crime which turned from individual to organised, Berov resigned in the autumn of 1994. The weak and non-transparent behaviour of political actors during this entire period provided ground for the proliferation of 'violent entrepreneur groups' who operated in the insurance and finance business. In the context of sharply decreased living standards, lost social security, massive unemployment, dwindled agricultural and industrial production, and high inflation, the Bulgarian population felt increasingly nostalgic of the lost social security under socialism and in the election at the end of 1994, they once again elected a BSP-led government. With a moderately ambitious programme, the new government under Zhan Videnov maintained the established course of the transition – towards liberal democracy and market economy. In 1996, the country entered a series of crises – a banking crisis,[8] followed by a 'grain crisis',[9] and at the end of the year, a currency crisis, which saw Zhan Videnov resign.

1997: a 'real revolution'

Before BSP could form a new government, however, the opposition demanded that BSP steps down. The negotiations hit a dead end and on the 10th January the Parliament building was besieged, and later in the evening – stormed by angry opposition supporters who demanded that BSP steps down; after a violent confrontation between police forces and protesters, the crowds were dispersed, but protests and blockades continued until February when BSP took the decision to back down. Most media and scholarly publications constructed the mass demonstrations as '*the rebirth of Bulgaria*' (Insider 1998, cited by Lavergne 2010) and 'symphony of hope' (Ganev 1997), and the confrontation – as a '*confrontation between civil society and the state*'. The events were also celebrated as "*the real Bulgarian democratic revolution*", which, these argued, did not happen in 1989 (increasingly seen as a 'palace coup' rather than a bottom-up revolution), but rather in 1997, when 'civil society took matters into their own hands'. These events form another milestone in the development of the civil society discourse in Bulgaria and are discussed in detail in the next section.

1997–2001: the opposition in power

The events of January-February 1997 marked the beginning of a new period in Bulgaria's transition – that of harsh economic reforms. A UDF government was formed under the leadership of Ivan Kostov (1997–2001) who embarked on a large-scale privatisation process, under the guidance of international financial institutions. Thus, the country's macroeconomic policies and structural reforms in the period 1997–2001 followed strict IMF guidance. The period came to be imagined as a 'stabilisation' of political, economic and social structures, and as the emergence of a '*broad consensus*' about the direction reforms were to take on: liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation. A 'civil society sector' (comprising NGOs, foundations, charities and think-tanks) began to establish itself as a 'partner' to the state, turning their relationship from a predominantly confrontational to a relatively collaborative one.

The "backslide" of 2001

Amid the drastic drop of living standards and loss of jobs during the large-scale privatisation initiative undertaken by Kostov's government, in the regular elections of June 2001, Bulgarians, disappointed by both of the two main political forces in power between 1990 and 2001 – the BSP and the UDF, elected their monarch-in-exile Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. His political party was created only two months before the elections but managed to win 42.7% of the votes (with only one seat in Parliament short of absolute majority), and formed a coalition government with the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (informally known as representing Bulgaria's Turkish minority) as a junior partner. This 'landslide victory' could also be interpreted as part of the East European-wide phenomenon of the rise of what

some (e.g. Hanley and Sikk 2013) have called 'anti-establishment' parties challenging the political status quo. However, the local public debates that ensued interpreted it as a 'landslide' – better translated in English as 'backslide' – which, many intellectuals argued, indicated the "immaturity" of the Bulgarian population, and endangered Bulgaria's 'modernisation process' which, they claimed, had finally started gaining speed during Kostov's government. This mega-discursive event constituted yet another milestone in shaping the 'civil society' discourse and hence is discussed in detail in the second part of the chapter.

2001–2012: the emergence of 'populist' political formations, and new allegiances to 'civil society'

Despite his populist rhetoric, the geopolitical orientation, the (neo)liberal economic and political course, and the Europeanisation paradigm, assumed by the previous (UDF) government, remained intact under Simeon II's government. The previous government's economic and political reform agenda were continued – the three pillars of the transition – privatisation, liberalisation and Europeanisation – were preserved. At the top of the new government's agenda continued to be 'sound fiscal and financial policies', economic growth and privatisation, further also adding a pronounced public campaign against corruption.

In the meantime, however, a new (bottom-up) populist, as well as nationalistic wave was rising in the figure of the far-right political party 'Ataka'. Paradoxically, 'Ataka' appropriated some left-wing rhetoric demanding social security and social protection, but rather than on behalf of all people, their claims were made on behalf of the 'ethnically pure' Bulgarians. A major legitimation strategy they utilised was to position themselves as a 'genuine' (as opposed to imported and foreign-interest driven) 'civil society'.

This is the point where I pause the cursory overview of the historical context. Inasmuch as the entire period leading up to 2013, and discussed in this chapter, is constitutive and formative of the 2013 developments, it is vital I trace the most important discursive and extra-discursive changes in relation to the 'civil society' discourse. Although I examine the 1989–2007 period in one go in this chapter, as can be seen from the previously provided short overview, I still break the period into several stages marked by major milestones in the development of the civil society discourse. To recap, these are: the year 1989, marked by the surfacing of the dissident-intellectuals; the year 1990, marked by the first civil disobedience activities which culminated in the 'City of Truth'; the period 1990–1997, marked by the mushrooming of the first civil society organisations amid growing instability, impoverishment, and conflict between state and civil society; the year 1997, marked by a second 'revolution', interpreted as this time 'from below' which brought the opposition into power; 1997–2001, featuring a period of intense neoliberal reforms, the entrenchment of particular forms of hegemonic apparatuses (think-tanks and NGOs); and the year 2001, when the return of the ex-monarch prompted a re-examination of, among other things, the idea and institutionalisation of civil society, as well as the first instances of a contestation over who has

the 'right' to express 'the voice of civil society'. In the following discussion, I offer a more detailed look into the discursive and extra-discursive formation of the concept of civil society in each of the important periods sketched previously.

Ideological and utopian elements in the constitution of the idea of civil society in Bulgaria (1989–2012)

To be able to carry out a purposeful analysis of the development of the civil society discourse, I have selected seminal texts (which have generated and/or represented significant discursive events) related to each of the historical developments discussed in the first part of this chapter. In the following discussion, I take a closer look at some texts, and a cursory look at others, focusing on them as discursive practices, as social practices, and as texts, in keeping with the CDA approach advanced by Fairclough (1992, 2003), as well as supplementing them with secondary literature. My analysis alternates between the discursive events and the structural changes because it is not possible to appreciate the import of the former for wider processes of social change without attending to the latter, and vice versa (Fairclough 1992). More specifically, I attempt to understand the processes of change as they occur in the discursive events, and at the same time to understand how processes of articulation, disarticulation and re-articulation affected, and were affected by, changing orders of discourse and social practices.

'The Great Time of the Intelligentsia': intellectuals leading 'civil society' before 1989

As suggested previously, civil society first appeared in the discourses of the 'revisionists' within the Communist Party around 1987–1988 in the context of talks about '*preustroistvo*' (the Bulgarian version of the Soviet '*perestroika*'). Thus, it emerged as part of the wider discourse of '*glasnost and preustroistvo*' which was dominant at the time, and particularly key for this early stage of the development of the civil society discourse was the concept of '*glasnost*'. Behind it we find the newly emerging possibility for the intelligentsia to speak without the party censorship which had been previously imposed. A basic characteristic of the '*perestroika*' ideology was that Soviet countries were now entering a new era, whereby not the party but the intelligentsia would be those 'who carry the truth and values', and whereby intelligentsia would be the principle leading agent of social changes.[10]

A major communicative event (Fairclough 2003) which was both constitutive of and constituted by the changing discursive and extra-discursive political-social practices of the time of '*preustroistvo*', and which was later celebrated as marking the first openly voiced dissident claims is the text 'The Great Time of the Intelligentsia' (from now on, GTI) written by dissident-philosopher Zhelyu Zhelev and published in *Narodna Kultura* (*People's Culture*) in July 1988. In terms of authorship, it is important to note that the 'author' is a *dissident-intellectual* and the 'principle' of the text[11] is the growing number of both oppositional and revisionist Bulgarian intellectuals, who saw in the new Soviet language of *perestroika* a chance for

democratisation of the Bulgarian regime, but who were also cognizant of the firmness of the conservative wing of BKP and of Todor Zhivkov's unwillingness to follow Gorbachev's line. Zhelev gained his dissident label when in the early 1980s he wrote '*The Fascism*' – a book which purported to expose the crimes of Fascism, but was rather intended as, and read as, an indictment of Communism – for which he was expelled from BKP and spent time in prison.[12] The term 'dissident' was by the 1980s commonly used in the West to refer mostly to intellectuals' positions in the context of a lack of freedom – they very often designated as 'anti-communist'. Yet, in the context of the more repressive regime in Bulgaria (relative to those in CEE), since the mid-1950s the 'dissidents' were mostly intellectuals, members of the party (or not), who did not verbally oppose the communist ideology, but rather expressed 'corrective' criticism whenever there was a serious mismatch between proclaimed values and their practical realisation (Hristova 2005; Hristova 2007). In this context, Zhelev's (and later pre-1989 dissident-intellectuals') texts appear as 'revisionist' rather than oppositional (and many of the intellectuals were genuine 'revisionists', rather than covert 'anti-communists' [ibid.]). Similarly, concepts such as 'democracy' and 'civil society' at the time were positioned within, rather than outside of, the socialist project – hence they talked of 'socialist democracy' and 'socialist civil society'. Inasmuch as these concepts were used before 1989 then, they were offered as *means* to achieving 'socialism with a human face', and the latter's feasibility nobody yet questioned, as evidenced by many of the memoirs which appeared throughout the 1990s (Kalinova and Baeva 2011).[13] In contrast, such a revisionist conception of dissidence – one that rested on the conviction that the system could be "humanized and democratized . . . from within'" (Michnik 1985: 135) – animated the political context of Central Europe only until the brutality of the suppression of the Hungarian and Polish uprisings of 1956 and of the Czechoslovakian uprising in 1968 (Kolakowski 1971).

Importantly, 'dissidents' in Bulgaria were almost always intellectuals – part of the so-called 'intelligentsia'. The 'intelligentsia' assumed an almost autonomous class consciousness during the communist regime (see Hristova 2005); it was composed of authoritative writers, artists, actors, scientists and others, whose popularity was publicly sanctioned, including through the mechanisms of power. During the regime, most of them were an important conduit for socialist propaganda (as in Gramsci's conception of 'organic intellectuals'), but many of them became public speakers (and opinion makers) whose opinions were recognised as more authentic than those of official (party) power-holders (ibid.). Their main social function was to be society's moral and cultural vanguard (much like Gramsci's [1971] 'moral leadership'), which entailed a catalyst role in society's progress. In the last days of the regime, they acted both as a group exerting political pressure and as experts influencing political decision-making (Hristova 2007). It is also worth noting that although the term itself is a Russian artefact (from Tsarist Russia), the genesis of the Bulgarian social group which was referred to as 'intelligentsia', needs to be traced specifically to the post-independence period of Bulgaria (after 1878), and particularly in Western-, as well as Eastern- (Moscow) educated people's attempts to become agents of cultural change and to bridge an imagined gap between what

they saw as local traditional, 'backward' habits on the one hand, and the West in Europe on the other – that is, attempting to impose a new civilizational model (Hristova 2005). In other words, this social group conceived of their role as a messianic duty to 'enlighten the masses' (Penev 1924) in line with Western cultural models.[14] The significance of such a conception, adopted by (and to some extent of) Bulgarian intellectuals, will transpire particularly strongly in the early years of the post-socialist transformation, and it also particularly manifests itself in Zhelev's text provided as follows.

A key and increasingly safer platform for communist intelligentsia, in the last years of the regime '*Narodna Kultura*', where Zhelev's text was published, was an important medium for 'dissenting' intellectuals to voice criticism against state bureaucracy. Criticism, as was commonplace during most of Bulgaria's socialist regime, was mostly voiced in 'Aesopian' (in the sixties and seventies) and 'cutback' (in the eighties) language (see Spasova 2014). Zhelev's GTI was thus a subtle and covert[15] yet categorical attack against 'state bureaucracy', warning the latter that failing to recognise the necessity of democratic changes, and particularly of the 'necessity' of intelligentsia's leading role in these imminent changes, would be detrimental to state bureaucracy (and might put the socialist project in jeopardy). With this, Zhelev sought to (re-)claim the intellectuals' influence and leading role in the future political configuration:

> [f]or Soviet society to be radically reformed, democracy, glasnost, public discussion of all questions of its history and social life are required, and because democracy cannot be decreed, just allowed 'from above', but rather indispensably requires the passing of its practical school [sic], for people to learn democracy through a continuous and open political fight against the forces of stagnation and conservatism, then there had to be found such public force, which could successfully solve this historical task. Such a force was found to be the intelligentsia. In this way, [the intelligentsia] was called upon to appear on the historical scene of the 'perestroika'.

With this, Zhelev sought to articulate the role of the dissident-intellectuals as one of mobilisers of the people, but without directly addressing them (more on this later). As argued earlier, this explicit messianic tone and the inferable 'cult of leadership' is not a new element, but points to an early instance of the ensuing preclusion of any genuine self-organisation 'from below', and can be seen as partly leading to the ensuing lack of strong collective mobilisations in the first two decades of the transition. It also marked the beginning of a tendency in the early years of the transformation to set the public (oppositional) agenda pursued as defined by the intellectuals,[16] rather than a genuine expression of the demands and concerns of ordinary people.[17]

Apart from articulating the leading role of the intelligentsia in the impeding changes, by far the most significant illocutionary act Zhelev attempted in his text is to explicitly challenge the 'party bureaucracy'. In this, he articulated the confrontational relationship as one of the 'party bureaucracy' against the 'intelligentsia'

(rather than against any wider collective agent, such as 'the people'): "[B]etween the intelligentsia and the bureaucracy as a whole, as social groups, there exist an irreconcilable contradiction in terms of interests, as a consequence to which [we can assert] the necessity for the struggle between them".

With this, Zhelev appears to attempt to disarticulate the intelligentsia away from the position of the state bureaucracy's bulwark, and rearticulate it as its counterpart: state bureaucracy and intelligentsia are engaged in a struggle (for hegemony) *on an equal par*. Such oppositional stance against the state is clearly reminiscent of the Central European dissidents' discourse of civil society. Although the 'anti-political' (see Konrad 1984) ethos adopted by Central European dissidents implied a somewhat different relationship with the state (e.g. one of avoidance, or defence), this new relationship there was articulated within the conceptual pair *state-civil society*. In Bulgaria on the other hand, the oppositional relationship was specifically one of *state versus the intelligentsia*. Where/what then was the articulation of 'civil society'? It figured in the Bulgarian dissident-intellectuals' discourse instead as *that which intelligentsia would lead*. In the next line, Zhelev continues:

> It is known that without a free, unrestricted exchange of opinions, without free movement of ideas and people, without free access to the entire [sic] information, without guaranteed publicity of the results of scientific research and creative work, there is no authentic intelligentsia . . . and without these the *intelligentsia cannot fulfil its main social role and its main public function – to be a spiritual [cultural] leader of the civil society, by creating for it new ideas and spiritual [cultural] values.*
>
> ·   (Emphasis added)

At this point, we can clearly distinguish three key subjectivities in Zhelev's text: that of the 'state bureaucracy', that of the 'intelligentsia', and that of 'civil society'. Unlike the Central European dissident discourses, where civil society overlapped with, and was essentially synonymous to the group of dissident-intellectuals, here we have, first, *a diffusion of the concept of civil society* itself (it refers to the population in general but carries no collective mobilisational meaning, and instead refers to the *essence* of the population, which needs to become 'civil', democratic, as evidenced by later discourses); and second, an explicitly articulated *relationship of asymmetrical power*, where (civil) society is to become civil (democratic) under the leadership of the intelligentsia.

There are two caveats I need to open here, however. First, considering the discourse genre and the order of discourse (Fairclough 2003) within which this communicative event took place (i.e. a public statement made in printed media, explicitly addressed to power-holders, in a repressive political context, we can surmise that for Zhelev this was a safer articulation), referring to a struggle of civil society against the state might indicate too strong references to Central European's dissidence, thus implying an organised attack, which Zhelev might have been attempting to avoid as too risky. Secondly, as mentioned in the previous section,

the concept was first used by party officials precisely in this sense – 'civil society' as synonymous to democratic (active, participatory) society. In this context, Zhelev might simply be 'appropriating' (in the Foucauldian sense) this discourse in his attempt to discursively shift relations of power in the era of *preustroistvo*.

Whatever his intentions were – whether the political power configuration he was discursively establishing in this way was simply following the party-sanctioned discourse, or was intended as a covert (and safer) attack, or as a truthful (from his position) articulation of the existing/desired political order – I argue that the consequences of such articulation for the conceptualisation of civil society were significant. Discursive events have cumulative effects upon social contradictions and the struggles around them (Fairclough 1992); in the months and years to follow Zhelev's text in '*Narodna Kultura*', various political leaders and public intellectuals continued to refer to civil society as democratic and civil (in the sense of 'polished' as used by Adam Ferguson 1995) society in general. For example, in 1994 Ivan Kostov, then-MP (but later prime minister) in a newspaper interview talked of civil society as synonymous to democratic society: "In a civil society the active role of the legal system is of crucial importance for the creation of harmonious relationships between the family and economic activity". And, "On our way to civil society we already have the three [separate] powers and one obvious achievement – the free press . . . What is needed is just inner [felt] freedom and genuine devotion to the democratic values of the civil society we are building".

Also, in a speech at the 'first free demonstration' on 18th November 1989, writer Georgi Mishev said, "[We] must transfuse from the live [sic] blood of the independent movements[18] into the veins of our civil society".

In this sense, the civil society imaginary at this early stage was not thought in terms of specific social groups (e.g. dissidents/movements) and in terms of specific behaviour (e.g. oppositionist), as was predominantly the case in CEE; it rather carried a more diffuse meaning – it was conceived as a blueprint for a new society – a democratic, civil, modern society. Such conceptualisation of civil society – as democratic society generally – also persisted in academic literature for some time during the postcommunist transformation. For example, Zlatkov's (1996) study titled *Are we moving towards a civil society*? sought to measure the progress of civil society by way of a representative survey of people's sense of agency and willingness to participate in public life in general, and talked of "the transformation of communist society into civil society" (p. 38), bemoaning the emerging £politico-mobster oligarchy" which "has nothing to do with an elite typical for a civil society" (ibid.). Similarly, one of the first books dedicated to civil society, written by one of the most eminent Bulgarian sociologists Georgi Fotev (1992), did not focus on the organisational and mobilisational aspects of civil society's functioning. For the author, the possibility for spontaneous and authentic expression of civic interests was central; the pluralism and freedom of civil society, to him, was to be realised through dialogue and cultural *advancement* (in the sense of development or 'evolution') (see also Popivanov 2004).

Overall, the dissident-intellectual political discourse of civil society during this period can be seen to have arisen out of the problematisation of traditional

party-bureaucratic discursive and social practices in circumstances where contradictions became apparent between the social relations, subject positions and political practices they were based in, and as part of a changing world following Soviet détente. The contradictory positioning of intellectuals (against the state) in discursive events originated in structural contradictions in the political relations within late socialist society. What crucially determined how these contradictions were reflected in dissident-intellectuals' texts, however, were the hegemonic struggles going on around these contradictions. In this sense, Zhelev's text was on the one hand one of the first explicit contributions to transforming the state-intelligentsia relationship through (counter-)hegemonic struggle, but on the other hand helped reaffirm the asymmetric power relationship between citizens and elites (both political and intellectual) by failing to identify himself (and thence dissident-intellectuals) with, and instead positioning themselves outside of, and on a moral high ground vis-à-vis civil society.

Thus, as opposed to dissidents in Poland and in Hungary (and to a lesser extent in Czechoslovakia[19]) who used the term 'civil society' as a patchy, but useful notion to articulate discursively a *frame for collective action* against the totalitarian state (see Ivancheva 2007), the concept of civil society around 1989 in Bulgaria was employed by dissident-intellectuals predominantly as a generalised *utopian blueprint for a coming society*. Yet, rather than seeing themselves as *subjects* of a newly emerging (or imminent) civil society – like their Polish counterparts – Bulgarian dissident-intellectuals saw themselves as the new cultural leaders whose duty, if not mission, was to lead the masses through the imminent changes, seen as a cultural transformation from a state socialist bureaucratic and controlled type of society towards an emancipated and 'civil' society. More specifically, to them, this would entail cultural change from the conformist mentality of the 'subject' to the emancipated mentality of the self-determined 'citizen'. In short, the civil society imaginary at this early stage was not thought in mobilisational terms, as was predominantly the case in Central Europe (Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia), but was instead imagined as a blueprint for a new society – a democratic, emancipated, civil, modern society, which, however, is Not-Yet-here, but whose 'birth' intelligentsia would assist (or, rather, lead). And as will later come to transpire, integral to this imaginary was its projection into the future. In this sense, the early civil society idea, as embraced by the intellectual-dissidents, was essentially a collectivist utopian project. Yet, this in essence authentic (utopian) vision of a new – civil – society partly accommodated the possibility for the reproduction of top-down power imbalances, which had demobilising effects for the popular classes – *since it is Not Yet civil, it had to let itself be led by the intelligentsia*. Thus, the potentially powerful (mobilising) concept of an inclusionary civil society was unwittingly transformed into an insipid ideological construct hardly related to a collective mobilisational and participatory democratic agenda. In practice, then, Bulgarian dissident-intellectuals' oppositional discourses could be seen as conducive to what Gramsci (1971: 106) called a 'passive revolution' only[20] – an elite-led endeavour which failed to engage the popular classes.

Civil society divided: the 1990 utopia 'City of Truth', 'energetic minorities' vs. 'docile majorities'

The discourse of '*preustroistvo*', within which Zhelev's and other dissident-intellectuals' texts before 1989 were embedded, generated anticipations for revolutionary change; and apart from a new – more significant – role for the intelligentsia (as the 'authentic carriers of values and truths'), the concept of '*glasnost*' also articulated hopes that in this way "people's eyes will be opened for all the truths, which were previously hidden from them" (Prodanov 2011). Soon after the change of leadership on the 10th November, the discourse of '*preustroistvo*', and with it the socialist frame of civil society, disappeared, but important conceptual meanings associated with it persisted and even intensified – for example, '*revolutionary*' in relation to the changes taking place,[21] as well as '*glasnost*' itself, which continued to be used for some time (particularly in slogans of the protests of 1989–1991). One of the most significant discursive events which contributed to the constitution and construal of 'civil society' in the immediate period after November 1989, was the one arising out of the civil disobedience acts in the summer of 1990 in response to the (disappointing for the anti-communist opposition) results of the first democratic elections. In what follows, I discuss the discourses which appeared and circulated at the time; the articulation, disarticulation, and re-articulation of political identities and relationships; and the consequences of these shifts for the (re-)conceptualisation of the idea of 'civil society'.

Since the executive power in Bulgaria after the first democratic elections stayed in the hands of the 'reformers' from the ex-Communist Party (who carried out the change of leadership on 10th November 1989), with the opposition failing to secure a strong position within the new political configuration through the ballot box, the opposition and their supporters attempted instead to push 'the changes' through '*street pressure*' (Kalinova and Baeva 2010) – a series of protest and civil disobedience acts in 1990 (occupations of public spaces, road blockades, hunger strikes, threats to self-immolate, demonstrations, etc.). The acts were initiated by students who occupied Sofia University and were supported by intellectuals – writers, artists, scientists, film directors, etc., who were later themselves followed by many ordinary "*free citizens*" (a key discursive frame). Since in essence these were attempts for political change of power outside of parliamentary democracy's procedures (attempts to overthrow the results of the first elections), they needed to be publicly legitimated. The key legitimating strategy utilised precisely the idea of civil society.

One of the central elements of these civil disobedience acts can be seen in the utopia[22] 'City of Truth' – the tent city, and the discourses that constituted and construed it, which appeared in central Sofia in the summer of 1990. Philip Dimitrov – then vice-chair of UDF (later prime minister) (cited by Rupov 2011) – narrated the event 'as a natural reaction to the tearful results of the [first] elections' and 'as a spontaneous expression of the anger of the people'. Particularly important, and regularly utilised elsewhere, are the adjectives '*spontaneous*' and '*natural*', used to describe these and later protest events initiated by the liberal opposition. The latter

adjective is also part of a new narrative around a '*natural development*' which emerged at the time: Bulgaria had been 'diverted away' from a natural course of development, which had created an 'artificial society' and it was now necessary to go back on the right track. In this 'natural development', it was claimed that some groups knew where history was heading, and what the 'right future' was (they carried progress); whereas others were bound to stay in the past. In a speech in 1990 Zhelyu Zhelev proclaimed that 'the time is ours' and 'the cycle of history spins inevitably to the full victory of democracy', implicitly drawing on similar words pronounced by Georgi Dimitrov, but this time it was not 'communism' that would win, but 'democracy' (cited by Prodanov 2011). As was shown earlier, this also implied that the place of the working class as the class-agent leading the changes would be now taken by the intelligentsia.

The other commonly used descriptive concept – that of 'spontaneity', was also part of a new discourse around *authenticity*, which marked the beginning of a typical fundamentalist conflict – between 'authentic' (or 'real') and inauthentic (parochial) – to distinguish between an act of non-party organised protest (for which the term 'civic' was used), as opposed to one inspired and organised by parochial (party) interests (which was discursively linked to the 'party-political', rather than the 'civic'). Of course, this discourse, on its part, is situated within the wider trend of depoliticization characteristic of the entire post-socialist region, and to some extent of global such processes (see, for example, Gerö and Kopper [2013] for a discussion of the concept of 'fake' civil society in Hungary). The depoliticization trends of the post–Cold War period are part of the global hegemonic (neo)liberal consensus. At this early stage of the development of the civil society discourse in Bulgaria and in CEE generally, however, it is difficult to talk of depoliticization. Instead, it is more appropriate to talk of 'decommunisation'. Thus, the common rhetorical elevation of civic values and of 'truth' and 'authenticity' above the world of politics is mostly situated within the anti-regime mobilizational discursive frame established by Central European dissidents over the preceding years (see, for example, Vaclav Havel's [1988] *Anti-political Politics* and Gorge Konrad's [1984] *Antipolitics*).

The common denominator of these rhetorical tropes was 'truth'. For instance, in the 'City of Truth', a central placard read: *When even the facts are silent, the communists continue to lie* (in Rupov 2011). References to 'truth', which exploited authentic human desires, were appropriated for the purposes of the project of decommunisation which was being inaugurated in these demonstrations. Only from the position of a 'civil' as opposed to a 'politicised' (which equalled communist and indoctrinated) society could protesters claim the genuine capacity to see things as they are, and to articulate claims to truth. Again, the centrality of the notion of 'truth' here is closely linked to Central European dissidents' conceptualisation of political opposition as 'life in truth' (see Havel's [1985] *The Power of the Powerless*), which denotes the practice of resistance against the regime's "panorama of lies" (Havel 1985: 142).

Such claims to 'truth' and 'authenticity' (and the discourses they were situated in) would continue to be utilised by the liberal democratic activists and political

actors for the entire duration of the transition. These essentially formed part of the binary construction which characterised the period's political confrontation in CEE: (communist) control and administration versus (civic) spontaneity, and the (communist) artificial and inauthentic life versus the natural and true life of the (liberal and 'civil') society. More generally, during this period we can talk of a new style of communication settling in the public sphere – that of bitter confrontation, characterised by stigmatisation, rejection and demonization of everything related to the old system, marking a general polarisation and dichotomisation of thinking. The old ideological discourse was discredited; it was now perceived to belong to the past. For example, the new liberal worldview did not need the concept of *narod* (people) as a collective subject and attempted to substitute it with '*citizen*'. This, however, did not prove an enduring discursive change because the concept of *narod* fully re-emerged in the public sphere when around 2001 a wave of 'populist' rhetoric embraced it once again. Its revitalisation, however, transpired as a counter-hegemonic strategy, forging a conflict between the liberal concept of '*citizens*' and the communitarian '*narod*'. The significance of this rift would transpire in Bulgaria on many occasions during the transition and would be particularly central to the 2013 protests' contestations, but its first markers can be found in the 'City of Truth' discursive event.

The adjectives 'spontaneous' and 'natural', coupled with the numerous denotations to '*truth*' (including in the name – 'City of Truth') essentially now articulated a 'civil society' frame of collective mobilisation (Snow and Benford 2000: 625–626) against the state. It captured the opposition's general euphoric, optimistic, celebratory consciousness, existing in a 'carnival delirium' (Prodanov 2011: 508), utopianally expecting that after the removal of obstacles coming from the state – the nomenclature, or BKP – the 'road to Europe' would be cleared, Bulgaria would reach the consummatory bliss of Western Europe, and 'democracy' would give the intelligentsia the opportunity to take the more significant place that it saw itself as deserving, without limitations imposed by the political sphere (ibid.).

Apart from a euphoric showdown between a celebratory 'civil society' and a discredited state, there appeared other very important fault lines. The subjectivities that the 1990 'civil society' frame of collective mobilisation interpellated (Althusser 1976) included the '*free*', the '*honest*' citizens (these two numerously appeared in the speeches given at the first demonstrations after 10th November) who were now called upon to challenge the Communist Party nomenclature which "did not want to go away". At the same time, however, the 'free' and 'honest' citizens who joined the protests demonstrations, the occupations and the City of Truth were not only positioned against 'the state', but also pitted against what were increasingly framed as 'silent', 'docile' and 'passive' majority of Bulgarian citizens, who resided predominantly in rural areas (and often voted for BSP to stay in power). It did not help that BSP organised a 'counter-demonstration' calling their supporters – and organising their transport to the capital – to counteract the opposition protests' challenge of the ex-communists' democratic legitimacy. The dominant interpretation thus posited not only a clash between a 'civil society' and the state, but also a clash between a 'civil society' (active, free and authentic) and

an 'uncivil' (passive, unfree and false) society. Observers commonly referred to the groups of protesters collectively as an *'energetic minority'* (Kabakchieva 2001) of *'free citizens'*, thus equating 'civil society' to an *enlightened and active minority, pitted against a docile and passive majority*. Thus, the elitist seeds of the Bulgarian protest discourses which, we shall later see, fully re-emerged in 2013, were sown back in 1990. Although varying in degree, a similar phenomenon was observable in post-socialist Central Europe as well (specifically in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic) (Brannan 2003).

What is more, key self-referential concepts, utilised by participants themselves were the words 'grazhdanski' ('civic'), and 'grazhdani' ('citizens'), both of which are derivative of the word 'grad' ('city'). For example, one of the central placards of the encampment 'City of Truth' read: *'Grazhdanska initsiativa v imeto na istinata'* (*'Civic initiative in the name of truth'*).[23] The semantic link between civil society, civic, and the city in the local context is particularly important for understanding both the local conceptualisation of the idea of civil society, and the latter's constitution and construal as part of the democratic transformation's sociopolitical developments, so I focus on it next.

The term 'civil society' in Bulgarian reads 'grazhdansko obshtestvo' – translated as civic (or 'citizens'') society, where 'citizen' could relate both to the subject of a state, and to the inhabitant of a city. What is significant here are the local cultural connotations of the words 'civic', 'citizen' and 'city'. These are rooted in the historical development of not only a cultural schism, but a hostile relationship, between the 'city' and the 'village' in Bulgaria and in Eastern Europe more generally. The two are identified as carriers of particular socio-cultural characteristics, which are subsequently played out in the conceptualisation of 'civil society'. The former is taken to epitomise a progressive, modern, liberal, pluralist, and individualist West; the latter embodies a traditional, retrograde, patriarchal, conservative and collectivist East. According to Roth (1997), although the hostile relationship between the two can be traced back to the Ottoman period, it was exacerbated by the communist regime's modernisation and urbanisation policies, which were perceived by urban dwellers as annihilating the city's (civic, modern, bourgeois) cultural universe, and as a 're-traditionalisation' (Roth 1997) of a supposedly established (pre-1944) urban bourgeois culture. On encountering this (latent) cultural conflict between the 'city' and 'the village', the 1989 'civil society' idea was re-articulated precisely along these fault lines. Thus, in some intellectuals' interpretations of the changes and of civil society, we read:

> [I]t is namely the city that represents the space of the public structures which counter the tribal and communitarian structures; this is where the net of interdependencies, which the citizen should accept, is created. This civil society in Bulgaria is currently under construction. We need to first rediscover the forgotten and lost city spaces, to construct the system we want to abide by and the structures in which we want to incorporate our civic responsibilities.
>
> (Angelova 1998)

[B]ut how do you make citizens out of this [village] world; how do you make civil society out of this unmodernised [sic] mass of people – nobody knows. We are today some very frightened, confused, quite demoralised and pessimistic people, who continue to survive, who continue to behave like crushed villagers, rather than like citizens. And they hate, and [they] are envious.

(Aleksandrov 2001)

The concept of 'civil society' was further pitted against the concept of '*narod*'. The latter commonly denotes the majority of the people, those who are not elite, and also degradingly as those who are unenlightened, retrograde and who perceive themselves as 'subjects' of the state rather than citizens with 'rights'. The collective concept of '*narod*' was/is thus often used in intellectuals' narratives degradingly as synonymous to the collective image of the 'villager' archetype. This bifurcating narrative forms the backbone of the descriptive grand-narrative of the absent or weak 'civil society', which, according to this discourse, can be 'found' or 'strengthened' only within the city space:

[T]he democratic shift in 1989 marked a return to the urban culture (almost magically the figure of the village poet disappeared from literature and public life). With the mass demonstrations which accompanied the changes, a kind of rediscovery of the urban space → pluralist and dialogical – occurred . . . However this shift occurred mostly in the limited intellectual circles. We have every reason to believe that the political immaturity, which our society showed in the first years of the transition, is a manifestation of the continuing tradition that has not been overcome.

(Znepolski 1999)

In this way, the early 1990s articulated two different, but linked, conceptualisations of the civil society idea: one prescriptive (related to a normative vision) and one empirical (descriptive). The normative, idealised, conceptualisation was initiated by the revisionist socialist discourse and the dissident-intellectuals, and was further taken up by politicians, journalists, academics, and ordinary people. It envisaged a new, modern, civilised society, or, in Bernik's (1999) words: an ideology of radical social utopianism, which generates myths about democracy. The second, empirical, conception, grounded in the cultural friction between the city and the village, distinguished (and set against each other) an active (energetic) 'civil' society, and a passive 'uncivil' mass society. What is more, such a bifurcated conceptualisation served as an interpretative frame, or an analytic tool, which legitimised an interpretative scheme which was employed by intellectuals and which saw social conflict not in terms of practically arising class antagonisms, but rather in terms of a comparison to a utopian imaginary of an ideal, perfect society. This, on its part, served to cover up and mask newly arising (economic) inequalities, issues of power and domination. Instead of viewing the new social antagonisms arising from the sharp fall in living standards and widening inequalities as rooted in economic decay during the transition, intellectuals, journalists and politicians made

use of the idea of civil society to legitimise the application of a cultural interpretative scheme – that is, that people went into poverty because they were passive, not because the neoliberalisation of post-socialist societies entailed the impoverishment of significant sections of the population.

Overall then, in the early stage of the transformation, the concept of civil society carried the notions of truth, morality, civilisation and emancipation, which became integral to the popular understanding of the term, explaining its general appeal and motivational capacity. The constituting characteristics of 'civil society' were 'spontaneity' and 'authenticity'. It carried the utopian message of the determination of the 'free people', who had been previously excluded from the political arena, to assert their agency and their capability to make autonomous decisions. At this early stage, the Western European focus on organisational aspects (in the Tocquevillian sense) of the functioning of civil society is not present in Bulgaria; and by the summer of 1990 the concept had acquired its constitutive 'other(s)'. First, this was in the figure of the *state* (which was still in the hands of the 'communists' and thence was seen as 'blocking' civil society's emancipation). The state represented control and rigidity, whereas civil society represented spontaneity and self-organisation; the democratic transformation and the 'coming civil society' which lied ahead (in time) then could be effected only by reviving society's internal capacities and by rolling back the grip of the state to its 'natural' limits.[24] And secondly, civil society's second 'constitutive other' was what was presented as the *passive majority of 'narod'*, whose 'civic immaturity' (seen in their lack of protest and in 'imprudent' voting choices) was seen as a threat to the democratic changes that the supporters of the opposition imagined. The euphoric, utopian intellectual consciousness which characterised the 1989–1990 civil society discourses gradually transformed in the following years – the anti-communist political identities intensified further amid gradual reshuffling of power relationships not only between political actors, but also among the intellectual elite. The restructuring of the power configuration in the latter's field – that of knowledge production, dissemination and interpretation – was particularly crucial in the subsequent re-conceptualisation of the idea of 'civil society' itself, and is discussed next.

Intellectuals divided: the traditional intellectual elite versus the new 'experts' in the 1990–1997 decommunisation project

Gramsci argued:

> Every social group, coming into existence on the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields.
>
> (Gramsci 1971: 5)

As a politically and externally initiated process,[25] however, the collapse of the communist regime in Bulgaria lacked the visibility of a *clear-cut* economic (or political) stratum which was 'coming into existence' and overthrowing the old system. It is therefore important that we take into account the relative chaos and vacuum occurring in numerous spheres of the political, economic,[26] and cultural life of the country. The lack of an organised dissident movement before 1989 also meant that there was no clear already-formed cultural and political opposition – it was being born at the same time as the regime was collapsing; rather than before it (Prodanov 2011; Lavergne 2010). If we can conclude with hindsight that there were, albeit not visible and homogenous, social groups which were rising on the economic terrain, the political and cultural elite (and more specifically, the organic intellectuals) who were to mobilise the appeal of, and consent to, the changes – by organising the knowledge and imagination of and about the transition and legitimising the specific direction of the changes – were yet to acquire and establish clear political and cultural identities. With the old political identities crumbling and new ones emerging, we could discern new fault lines surfacing.

In the strictly political sphere, we can broadly distinguish a fundamental clash between *non-communist* and *anti-communist* political identities (Prodanov 2011: 511–512) – an Eastern European wide distinction (see also Trencsényi 2014) that has also been labelled as the 'post-communist cleavage' (Grabowska 2003). The Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) adopted a non-communist position which discarded the concept of communism, and attributed the negative aspects of the old regime to the geopolitical situation and to the turpitude of part of the party leadership – the 'circle' around Todor Zhivkov. In their search for legitimacy, BSP fully adopted the language of Western European liberal democratic ideology. The second pole – the *anti-communist* one – was adopted by the right-wing, mainly in the figure of the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), which completely rejected the idea of any positives pertaining to the old regime, evaluating it as fundamentally 'unfree', and consistently vilified it, whilst idealising the period up to 1944 which they claimed 'interrupted' the 'normal' development of the country. (As I show later, these elements of the anti-communist discourse fully re-emerged in the discourses of 2013.)

It was also along these lines that the new political identities of the intelligentsia aligned. The dynamics of the contestations in the intellectual field after 1989–1990 are crucial to understanding the dynamic construction and construal of the civil society concept in the period. The intellectuals' (and more broadly, the 'energetic minority's') victorious, and at the same time bifurcating, discourse of 1990 described in the previous section, set the stage for a conceptualisation of civil society in terms of 1) an active minority (as against a passive majority) who pursue 2) truth (authenticity) and freedom (emancipation), which could only be achieved once 3) the communist state had been removed. In the years that followed, this conceptualisation largely gained hegemonic dominance, but the process was uneven and not without (sometimes intense) contestation. In the lines that follow, I review the major fault lines which marked these contestations, and the resulting shifts in the conceptualisation of the civil society concept by 1997.

With the 1989 breakdown of the official party control over the practices of public knowledge research, as well as over media, new discursive practices and orders of discourse – new practices (and agents) of production, dissemination and consumption of public knowledge – emerged. Particularly interesting in terms of the conceptualisation of the idea of civil society are these shifts in relation to the intellectuals' place and role in the new practices of knowledge production – traditionally in scientific research spaces (universities, research institutes), as well as in the new practices of knowledge-dissemination (media).[27] A study carried out by Deyanova (2000) identified two 'levels of presence' of the intellectuals in the public sphere during the 1990s – a 'romantico-ideological' level embodied by 'the engaged intellectual', and an 'expert talk' level embodied by the NGO (think-tank) expert. In 1999 Ivan Krastev, one of the most prolific Bulgarian liberal intellectuals, further described the newly-emerged think-tanks as hubs of principally engaged experts with strong media presence (and influence) as well as the 'invisible hand of the transition' – skippering the assumed liberal (anti-Keynesian) direction of reforms (Krastev 1999). Drawing on their research of intellectuals' public knowledge production/dissemination practices in media, and utilising Krastev's terminology, Deyanov (2008) and Deyanova (2008) further make a key analytical distinction between what they call 'factories for data' (sociological agencies), 'factories for arguments' (think-tanks), and 'laboratories for knowledge' (academic research institutions, universities and academies). Deyanov (2008) showed that the former two technologies worked together, as part of the expert hegemonic apparatus, producing normalised public opinion. They generated interpretations of society's problems, formulated arguments and designed agendas. With this, they ordered the public debate – setting priorities, selecting and interpreting the data on which public debates were to be based. That is, they were not just 'factories' for the production of data and arguments, but also 'normalisation machines, technologies for the taming of public opinion' (Deyanov 2008: 366–374). From a Gramscian perspective, then, they worked as 'organic intellectuals' – 'permanent persuaders' (Gramsci 1971: 10).

Deyanova (2008) further identified an 'odd' polarisation (or schism) between the research carried out by the former two, particularly think-tanks and NGOs, on one hand, and the latter, universities and academic workers, on the other. Her examination of their work in the period showed that these two 'communities' ignored each other – they did not cite each other's work and did not recognise each other's legitimacy. The schism reflected the previously identified distinction (within their media presence) between 'romantico-ideological' and 'expert' language, respectively. From a Gramscian perspective, then, we can roughly think of the former as representative of the 'traditional intellectuals', who present themselves as 'autonomous and independent of the dominant social group' (Gramsci 1971: 7), but whose political identities and relationships crumbled and fragmented during the vacuum created by the precipitous changes. The new 'expert' class, based in NGOs and think-tanks on the other hand, can be thought of as a much more homogenous and consistent group of 'organic intellectuals', whose role was to organise the practical content of the new – liberal – hegemonic project of the

democratic transformation, which they organised around neoliberal policy programmes and consistent emulation of the West, as the 'common sense' trajectory for post-socialist 'reform'. As an oft-quoted remark (commonly attributed to Ferenc Misslivetz, a Hungarian academic and dissident [Einhorn 2005]) goes, "What we dreamed of was civil society. What we got were NGOs".

Using Fairclough's terminology then, these two 'languages' (romantico-ideological and expert) are constitutive of the two main discourse 'styles' of the 1990–1997 civil society discourse. The former 'lived its moment' during the euphoric 1989–1990 resistance to the state; the latter developed with the appearance of a network of externally-funded non-governmental organisations (foundations, charities, think-tanks) which spewed in the first six to seven years of the 'transition', forming an entire 'sector', often referred to as 'the Third Sector'. The emergence of the 'Third Sector' marks a significant re-conceptualisation of the idea of 'civil society' – from the early (in some ways Fergusonian[28]) diffuse utopian imaginary of an entirely new, civil, democratic, emancipated society, as embraced by the traditional intellectuals in 1989–90, to a (Tocquevillian[29]) self-organised, independent (from the state) and self-sufficient, expert-led (depoliticised) network of 'associated citizens'. In this respect, the development of 'civil society' in Bulgaria is consistent with similar developments in Central Europe, where analogous 'NGO-isation of civil society has been observed (see, e.g., Hemment 1998). Let us now turn to the contents of this new conception of civil society and the mechanisms through which it became hegemonic.

As Lavergne (2010: 531) notes, the new network of civil society organisations claimed the role of middle men in an "economy of expertise where they were the idea brokers and the importers/exporters of know-how". They claimed the role of neutral experts who applied objective-scientific political and analytic tools which are effective, and who produced 'rational' prognosis beyond any moral (emotional/cultural) considerations. They claimed the image of the 'rational experts' at the same time as formulating arguments rooted in a particular value system with which they identified – a (neo)liberal one. In an in-depth analysis of their discourses, Lavergne (2010) showed that the think-tank experts asserted their 'objective-independent' nature not through claims to a lack of a value-laden approach, or to the consideration of multiple scientific interpretations, but rather by way of grounding their claims in liberal democratic values which were considered to be 'objectively' superior. The rhetoric of the expert-intellectuals rested on the traditional-modern dichotomy, presenting themselves as an enlightened, modernising force in contrast to the shadows of the communist past. Yet, the expert-intellectuals presented themselves as defenders of the 'rights' of (the whole of) society against the encroachments of the state (which, they insisted, continued to pose the biggest threat). They did not present their ideas and activities as political but as universal – in an attempt to turn them into hegemonic.

Once again, the overall legitimation strategy of the new (third) sector utilised precisely the idea of 'civil society'. And it was essentially a double legitimation strategy. As Lavergne (2010) also notes, the 'NGO civil society' described previously presented themselves at the same time as both actors in and leaders of civil

society. First, they were civil society leaders when they acted on behalf of the teleological paradigm of the transition, whereby civil society was to materialise in the form of a network of independent (from the state) and self-sufficient organisations (just like the transition was a ready-made package of economic and legal reforms [Ágh 1993]). The desired civil society here came with a concrete recipe for its development, and its telos was at the same time situated temporarily in the future, and geographically to the West. In this first legitimating strategy, the NGO experts claimed the roles of 'democratisers', 'modernisers', and 'decommunisers', modelled after the normative ideal of the *capitalist modern and open society* (inspired by Henri Bergson 2002; Karl Popper 2011).

For example, in Bulgaria in the period 1995–1997, several key NGO experts formed a working group and launched a project called '*Initiative for the Support of Civil Society*' (Dainov et al. 1997). It involved some of the key expert-intellectuals who had by now assumed the role of '*experts of the transition*'. Together they formed a 'task force' (named '*Group with special task – civil society*') whose objective was to:

> [f]ormulate a practical strategy for activities and collaboration, which would ensure the survival of the reforms within the frames of civil society, and which would assist the development of civil society and the non-governmental organisations; to find avenues for the application of this strategy via collaboration and its gradual practical and regional dispersal; to offer it to non-governmental organisations, to the media, to business circles, and even to governmental institutions (despite the socialist government's open hostility towards the development of civil society), as well as to the international organisations and sponsors. . . .
>
> (p. 10)

The work on the project seemed to have entailed predominantly work on/with NGOs, as indicated by the contents of the project's final report.[30] A more detailed exploration of the project's work and discourse shows that the concept of civil society was used in one of two ways, and always in relation to NGOs. In the first mode of usage, theoretically, civil society seemed to be what NGOs were appointed to 'lead' or to 'develop'. In this sense, NGOs seemed to occupy a semi-external position – carrying higher authority vis-à-vis civil society. In its second usage, practically, it looked like the development of NGOs was an end-in-itself, since all of the project's concerns seemed to be related to the NGO sector and its practical development and organisation, in this way practically equating NGOs with civil society.

At the same time, the civil society experts embraced a second positioning. Their discourse made use of terms such as civil society to narrate the birth of democracy as a (social) movement initiated and led from below (bottom to top). In this way, they turned into revolutionaries and tribunes (before 1997), who defended the 'democratic agenda' which in their eyes was threatened by the state, and particularly by the "badly disguised communists" who 'did not want to go away' until

1997. Thus, the imperative to oppose the state, even after the collapse of the formal totalitarian system, persisted in this period. Articulating a relationship of opposition, (rhetorically) conceived of in moral and universal rather than political terms, served to situate civil society on a moral high ground vis-à-vis the state. Its role was constructed as one of a state-liquidator – an entity that was to dismantle the state and restructure society, to displace the totalitarian settlement and the political culture underpinning the 1944–1989 establishment. Such an anti-statist discourse is formative for the early philosophy of civil society in the post-socialist region – it was essentially understood as a network of non-governmental organisations, which have the power to counteract the state and to control it (Gellner 1994).

It was particularly as part of such a positioning during the early years of the transformation (between 1990 and 1997) that some of the expert-intellectuals solidified their role as dissidents[31] opposing the state which (while being under BSP's rule) they perceived as a threat to the start of the liberal democratic transition.

The 'revolution' of 1997

This brings us to the next significant milestone in the re-articulation of civil society – the 'revolution' of 1997. In numerous media and scholarly publications, the mass demonstrations were presented as 'the rebirth of Bulgarian democracy' (Insider 1998, cited by Lavergne 2010) or Bulgaria's 'symphony of hope' (Ganev 1997), and the confrontation – as a 'confrontation between civil society and the state'. The 1997 demonstrations thus marked the date of the 'deliverance' of civil society from the constraints of the 'continued-to-be-communist state' – civil society had, as Kalinova and Baeva (2010) summarised, 'finally' learned to exert real control over the state.

The events were also celebrated as "the real Bulgarian democratic revolution", which did not happen in 1989, but rather in 1997 (Lavergne 2010). The 1996–1997 crisis was to be presented as a turning point not only in the country's political and economic agenda, but also in the "attitude of society towards the reform process serving as a kind of catharsis" (Dakova and Vukova 2003). The expert-intellectuals whose visibility before 1989, as well as during 1990, was minimal, used this 'revolution' to legitimise their oppositionist stance (sometimes even in the discourse of dissidence): their lack of pre-1989 dissident activity was now absolved – they had redeemed themselves by playing a significant role in the organisation and mobilisation of the demonstrations – a role which they now claimed. The 1990 language of 'spontaneity' and 'authenticity' persisted. The expert-intellectuals saw their mission as helping 'authentic' society – supporters of the opposition (UDF) – to express itself spontaneously; in this, they acted as the organisers and legitimators of the protests of 1997. By claiming for themselves the roles of leaders of the 1997 'revolution', they fully affirmed both their own legitimacy and claimed their status as 'leaders' of civil society. Thus, as ideologues and organisers of civil society in Bulgaria in 1990–1997, the expert-intellectuals gained the legitimacy of leaders of an opposition which no longer constituted an alternative between political parties, but another kind of alternative – that between civil society and the state; they aimed

to gain the legitimacy of representatives, of a kind of platform, for 'the citizens' against their oppressor – the 'still-communist' state. The delegitimation of the state seven years after 1989 did not involve much struggle – it was an easily won battle forged in the midst of an increasing disenchantment with the failure of the post-socialist state. The concept of civil society as epitomised by the opposition seemed like a preferable alternative (to the failing state) for ever-growing sections of society. It promised an exit from bureaucratic inefficiency and political corruption as the state could no longer be relied upon: by 1997 it had failed miserably.

Overall, then, in the period 1990–1997 we can talk of (radically) changed subjectivities, power relationships and discourses. The changing context of social structures, practices and events looked like this: shifting political and cultural identities (non-communist and anti-communist; and romantico-ideological and expert styles); shifting social relations of power and domination (in the political, but also in the intellectual field, where a new sector of NGOs and think-tanks replaced the more differentiated traditional intellectuals' order of discourse); and of shifting constructions of systems of knowledge and meaning (from an 'irrational' euphoric utopianism to the 'rational' objectivity of the transitional democratic agenda). In this context of new structures and orders of discourse, the idea of civil society got caught up in the contestation between the early traditional dissident-intellectuals' euphoric utopian anticipation of a radically new (and better) society, and the later organic intellectual-experts' highly rationalised and prefabricated conceptualisation of civil society as a network of NGOs powerful enough to confront the state. Both the earlier and the later dominant conceptualisations articulated 'civil society' as the antonym of authoritarianism, and thus positioned it against the state. Civil society was to limit the power of the state over all areas of social life, and with this, the new – liberal – articulation of civil society uncoupled the historical pairing of state and civil society. But any earlier rhetorical attempts to depoliticise the concept (seeking to articulate it as civic rather than political) had to be postponed as the *civil* public had to transform itself in the run-up to the '1997 revolution' into the *political* public – concerned with the form and content of power. The 'civil' in 'civil society' could not practically signify the non-political, as it needed to articulate a right to engage in a direct confrontation with the state (which was perceived as still captured by communists). In this way, the popular CEE mantra of the 'liberation of civil society' from the suffocating grip of the state (Beckman 1993) in Bulgaria came to refer to something more. It came to signify the need to liberate society from the grip of the ex-*communists* specifically, and to bring into power the opposition which by now had come to be identified as practically synonymous with 'civil society'. In essence then, the new intellectual-expert class' struggle to impose a 'rational' democratic agenda involved first and foremost instituting the opposition – to them, the only legitimate social force to bring about genuine democratic changes (Fotev 1992) – in power.

It is also important to note that as much as the concept of civil society was politicised in practice (that is, it was used as a legitimating mechanism to induce political changes), rhetorically the attempts to articulate it as 'outside of the left-right paradigm' persisted. In fact, the latter strategy was particularly helpful in

articulating civil society as substituting the 'outdated' left-right political confrontation, and establishing a consensual vision of itself as encompassing the 'truth' (earlier discourses) and the 'rationality, objective superiority and inevitability' (experts' discourses) of the new liberal democratic project. If we think of 1989–1997 as the first major period of the conceptualisation of civil society in Bulgaria, then we can think of 'civil society' during this period as a nodal discourse, which attempted an ideological articulation of several other discourses and narratives, including: 1) 'communist' state versus 'free and honest citizens', and 2) 'free and honest citizens' (civil society) versus 'unfree and passive popular subjects' (of the state); 3) 'rational' experts promoting the democratic agenda versus irrational traditional intellectuals; and finally 4) a civil society space whose positioning beyond any left-right political identities grants it the legitimacy to engage in political struggle. These dichotomies were of course fraught with particularistic and undemocratic assumptions and distortions, and they carved out a host of unequal power relationships which were to persist and aggravate.

These discourses and narratives taken together constituted the rising political and intellectual elites' attempts during 1989–1997 to manufacture consent for the new liberal-capitalist ideology, whilst exploiting utopian longings for truth, emancipation and democratic participation. The role of the intellectuals was to both construct and enact this form of the idea of civil society. In this way, the utopian longing for freedom and truth, provided 'the "gold-bearing gravel" (Bloch 1977: 38) of an ideological hegemonic apparatus which depoliticised the public sphere, at the same time as pursuing a strictly political project, and demobilised vast sections of society by imposing a dominant language which masked and ignored their interests and problems, by being completely indifferent to the notion of power. It was the urban middle class agenda – of the 'active-energetic enlightened minority' that was best secured by the invocation of such a notion of civil society; the agenda of the increasingly oppressed and marginalised small-town Bulgaria – what was degradingly renounced by expert-intellectuals as a 'passive and docile majority of subjects' was increasingly unrepresented by this notion.

An 'emancipated' civil society directing the state (and society)
on a 'modernisation' and 'Europeanisation' course: 1997–2007

After the 'revolution' of 1997, which instituted the opposition in power, the expert-intellectuals continued to define their 'mission' within the framework of civil society. Only, now their relationship with the state was to change – they were no longer going to oppose it, but rather to 'direct' it (Dainov 2000), to 'lead' its dismantling, whereby social life spaces vacated by the state would be taken over by civil society, understood as a network of NGOs. After the fall of the socialist government in 1997, then, the main task of NGOs' projects became 'civil society building' (Lavergne 2010).

This again rested on their presentation of their ideas, norms and values not as political (and particularistic), but as universal. Having won the battle for the legitimate public knowledge production and dissemination spaces, the

expert-intellectuals were now the most homogenous and influential group who was "providing intellectual ballast" (Shields 2015: 167) for the hegemonic project of the neoliberal reformers of the UDF government. While in 1989–1990 the historic bloc was in an ambiguous and dynamic state when no clear political, economic and intellectual groupings had yet emerged and their reshuffle and constitution was in progress, by the time of the more significant change of political elites in 1997 we could now describe a power configuration which more closely resembled the historic bloc that Gramsci described and criticised in the 1930's capitalist West. Many of the expert-intellectuals worked as 'permanent persuaders' (Gramsci 1971: 10), procuring consent for neoliberal reforms from wider and wider sections of society whose socio-economic interests did not tally with the neoliberal agenda. The 'rational' knowledge produced by intellectuals functioned to present (neo) liberal politics as the commonsensical, natural way forward, which was expressed in universal terms, despite serving particularistic interests (Cox and Sinclair 1996).

Rhetorically, their projects continued to occupy a role as 'midwives' of democracy from below, and even as representatives of 'the people' and of its everyday difficulties. Dostena Lavergne's (2010) study showed, however, that NGOs conceived of and formulated a civil society only in the frames of their projects, defined by the programmes of their donors. As she argues, NGOs from the countryside were just actors in a scenario where roles were assigned in advance; they were not just representatives of civil society, but those who initiated, framed and controlled its development.

What is more, to legitimate current economic and social reforms, the organic intellectuals exploited several key strategies. First, they consistently pitted 'civil society' against 'the past' – that is, against the past authoritarian (communist) and *closed* society. Secondly, they exploited the strategy of setting (Western) civil society against Eastern (Oriental) backwardness and communitarian primitivism. The individualist ethos was elevated as an inherently superior mode of being and inextricably linked to the idea of civil society. Finally, they exploited a discourse focusing on the importance of knowledge (education and informed [political] choice) for democratic participation. In this sense, if possession of property was what made man a citizen in classical liberalism, it was a '*civic position*' (which inevitably meant a liberal individualist political stance) and *education* that made them a citizen and a worthy member of civil society in the postcommunist liberal transition.

In practice, one of the key genres (Fairclough 2003) in which the expert-intellectuals enacted these discourses was that of socio-political and cultural 'analysis' – mostly sociological and anthropological analyses of society, which were widely disseminated through the media. A particularly important characteristic of their 'analytical' approach was the utter rejection of Marxist analytical categories such as class and inequality. Instead, to stratify society, for example, they used the criteria of place of residence, age, education, occupation and level of income to plot society onto a simple coordinate grid: active-passive, and independent-dependent (see, for example, Dainov et al. 1997). The former referred to their level of participation in civil society, and the latter to the level of (both attitudinal and objectively measured) dependence on the state. It is only natural then that such categories

and frames of thought, and such values and norms, including all the inherent contradictions they entail, produced by the intellectuals, would also permeate and seep through ordinary people's 'common sense', albeit changing and mutating in line with people's own life experiences and previously held beliefs. Indeed, my analysis of 2013's discourses later in this book will illustrate that protesters' mobilisational discourses produced such continuities and discontinuities, uncritically rehearsing some of the above, but also challenging and re-negotiating others.

A 'modern' and 'open' civil society threatened by populism: the 'backslide'

The shrinking of state welfare and the opening up of markets inevitably led to relentless austerity and enormous unemployment. The withdrawal of the state from responsibility for those in need, left them in an increasingly vulnerable and insecure position and "at the mercy of those who were in a position to profit from the new arrangements" (Chandhoke 2007: 608). The campaign of the expert-intellectuals to use the emotional appeal of the concept of civil society to advance the liberal-capitalist agenda of the 'transition' began to grind against people's aggravating precarity and disillusionment with both political and intellectual elites' rhetoric. This brings us to the next milestone in the construction and construal of the civil society concept in Bulgaria – as well as in CEE more generally – which came with the unexpected return of the Bulgarian former tsar, and with the emergence of what were later described as 'anti-establishment parties' in other post-socialist countries in Eastern Europe. The June 2001 elections marked the dissolution of the bipolar arrangement of the Bulgarian party system characteristic of the first decade of the 'transition'. The political discourse of Simeon II's election campaign was widely defined as 'populist': it offered pledges to radical change, but provided little substantive detail. Most heavily concerned with Simeon's 'populism' were the expert-intellectuals who saw in the rising 'populist wave' a threat to the 'open' civil society they were attempting to build.

At the time, one major forum where the 'populist danger' was discussed was organised again by 'civil society organisations' as part of a project called *Bulgaria in 21st Century: Where Are We Heading?* (Dainov 2002). It aimed to gather the Bulgarian 'elite' in order to analyse what they saw as the political '*backslide*' produced by the election results and its implications. The project was launched by the non-governmental organisation Centre for Social Practices and was funded by the Open Society Foundation. Three round-table discussions took place, gathering the opinions of "leading experts from different fields, engaged in one way or another with public life" – scholars, NGO experts, journalists, politicians, local government officials, and businessmen. Here are some of their conclusions:

> [The 'Landslide' of 2001 represents] a backslide from the level of the political (the rational, de-mystified from the world of Weber) to the traditional-mundane;[32] a backslide from the level of self-determination to the level of

dependency; a backslide from the level of action to the level of reception; a backslide from the level of responsibility to the level of infancy; a rejection of freedom in return for handouts. . . .

(Dainov 2002: 29)

A need to take these seriously, and presumably act in an attempt to rectify the situation, was emphasised:

[F]rom the perspective of the open society's agenda, the displacements [triggered by the populist electoral victory] which occurred in Bulgaria are more than alarming. In its foundations, the open society rests on free and self-determining, responsible individuals, who take their decisions on the basis of informed rationality and bear responsibility for the decisions they take. . . . The apparent inclination of the majority of the Bulgarian society, as demonstrated in 2001, to withdraw from the position of autonomous individuality and civil association – the re-emergence of a culture of powerlessness and dependency – should be subject to evaluation on the part of anybody who thinks the agenda of the open society as desirable, and who conceptualises Bulgarian development since 1989 as an embattled attempt to achieve such an open society.

(ibid.: 2)

Civil society was once again wrapped in the rhetoric of modernisation, only now the rhetoric of action and pragmatism took on a sharper pseudo-critical character. Discourses portraying society as 'pre-modern', 'immature', 'closed' and 'passive' permeated the analyses of Bulgarian voters' choice in 2001. From the perspective of the expert-intellectuals, the idea of civil society during this period suffered a major blow. Their work on developing civic traditions and capacities for 'self-organisation' of society they saw as being stalled by no other than the 'uncivil', 'backward', 'pre-modern' and 'infantile' *narod* of Bulgaria. At the heart of the problem lay what they saw as the 'lack of active and independent individuals':

[F]or civil society to exist, we need clearly defined individuals. The individual as such develops until the age of 15 and hence most people in Bulgaria are not individuals – they have reached their 15th year during communism. . . .

(ibid.: 29)

[we are witnessing] a withdrawal of the people from the ideology of working (and of civil/political society) . . . [and] a backslide into subordination and plebeian envy. . . .

(ibid.: 33)

The democratic choice of Bulgarians to 'stall' the (neo)liberal reforms of UDF were also interpreted as *irrational*:

We obviously overestimated the relative strength of the rational component in the mass consciousness . . . What the electoral backslide (and generally the

masses' behaviour in relation to politics) in 2001 showed us is that the rational component is significantly weaker in determining the attitudes, motivations and behaviours of communities and social groups. . . .

(ibid.: 18)

Thus, to explain the 'populist' vote, the expert-intellectuals of civil society continued to speak of passive vs. active, and independent vs. dependent individuals, rather than engage in any form of socio-economic analysis that would link the result of the vote to the sharp fall in living standards and growing social inequalities of the decade of transition reforms preceding the vote. Had they done this, they would have been able to recognise that the results of the elections signalled a burgeoning counter-hegemonic popular impulse that desired to dispose with the liberal consensus established in 1997 in Bulgaria. The vote essentially represented the rising dissatisfaction of that section of society which the 'intellectual-experts' saw as the 'passive docile majority' of rural and small-town Bulgaria whom they derided for years and attempted to banish from the political arena.

The rise of 'populism' and the first contestations over who 'represents' civil society

Austerity, disillusionment, uncertainty and political exclusion by 2001 had manifested themselves in a number of tendencies which further shifted some of the ways 'civil society' was thought of. New 'populist' political parties started to emerge after 2001. These were characterised by charismatic leaders and a collectivist ethos, and they mobilised support via promises of radical change, but they were often essentially fundamentalist and exclusionary. While generally positioned outside of classical definitions of civil society (and even often designated as 'uncivil society'; see, for example, Kopecký and Mudde 2003), many of them began to stake a direct claim on civil society: they presented themselves as 'genuine representatives' of an 'authentic civil society'.

This new discourse – often dismissed as 'populist' – entered the public spheres across the post-socialist region as 'national' alternatives to what were often called the 'comprador bourgeoisie' of the expert-intellectuals. By far the most popular new agents of this discourse in Bulgaria were the nationalistic political party 'Ataka' established in 2005. Although I will not discuss these parties' discourses in detail, in the following discussion I consider some of the key features of their rhetoric, specifically in terms of the popular appeal they invoked.

This new trend is part of the emergence of anti-establishment (party) political forces in Central and Eastern Europe which contested the hegemony of the dominant political elites and their experts: the latter had now become 'enemies of the people', 'agents of the multinational corporations and of the US', who used the paradigm of the transition 'to deceive and rob the people'. The 'system' and the political was rejected in principle, and the alternative that was proposed was the 'return to the roots' – the rediscovery of the nation and its lost glory. Parties such as *Ataka* claimed to uncover the mechanisms of the 'Atlantic and European plot', whose mediators were the official experts of the think-tanks (as well as the

political parties in power) and thence the *imposed foreign model of 'civil society'*. However, the mixture of these new agents' critical discourse with often racist, anti-Semitic, and other radically exclusionary discourses threatened to marginalise any further critical attempts levelled at the class of the experts – which distorted them and depleted their critical potential.

These new political forces active in the formal political party arena placed demands associated with the idea of the common good – social welfare, secure jobs and human dignity. Yet, these demands were restricted to the 'ethnically pure' core population. So, in Bulgaria these demands pertained solely to Bulgarians who were also presented as an oppressed ethnic 'minority' threatened by 'predatory' Roma and Turkish populations, as well as by foreign corporations and governments. In this way, critical and progressivist longings were combined with exclusionary rhetoric which built on victimisation discourses of Bulgarians as an Ottoman colony in the past. Unfortunately, in Bulgaria this rhetoric was proving increasingly successful in targeting the disenfranchised working poor and the unemployed (Ivancheva 2014). In terms of the already established network of NGOs, apart from a small circle of civic activists, the vast majority of the population failed to identify with and remained sceptical to their donor-driven projects and initiatives (see, for example, Balkan Assist's Report *Civil Society without the Citizens 2003–2005*).

Civil society as the road to modernity and to Europe – the 'catch-up' utopia

Generally, there are two main discourses within which the 'civil society' discourse of the expert-intellectuals was specifically embedded in Bulgaria after 1997 – the discourses of 'modernisation' and that of 'Europeanisation'. In Central Europe these same ideas were discursively narrated as 'the return to Europe' – and even though the perceived 'distance' to modernisation and Europeanisation was shorter, the notion captured the same ideological construct. The modernisation ideology in a broad sense served to bridge the gap between the party elite which embarked on the harsh pro-market reforms, and the ever-so-severely suffering from the reforms electorate. The concept of modernisation embodied the following message: it is not a question of choosing between liberal capitalism and democratic socialism; it is a question of the future of modernity. It also served as a political denominator between economic reformers from all party stripes in all governments since the beginning of the post-socialist transitions in the region (though specifically after 1997 in Bulgaria) and bridged the gap between the non-communist and the anti-communist political identities because it was directed towards the future rather than the past. The bottom line was that although the first item on the postcommunist 'agenda' was to develop a 'market economy', modernity had significance beyond the question of which political regime happened to be in power. Generally speaking, this rhetoric served as an umbrella under which a range of different values might 'cohabit'; it served as an euphemistic substitute for the claimed lack

of ideology in the proclaimed post-ideological consensus on liberal democracy. Many authors, including Sampson (2003) and Hann and Dunn (1996), establish a direct link between the practices of development and the discourse of modernisation on one hand, and the imposition of a (neo)liberal form of civil society. In practice, the emotional appeal of the modernisation discourse served to manufacture consent to an idea which (in the form it was propagated by the expert-intellectuals) justified social displacement masked by the emotional appeal of notions such as 'autonomy' and 'self-care'.

Similarly, the Europeanisation discourse easily took root and rallied enthusiastic support in Bulgaria. Dimitrov and Krasteva (1998, cited by Dimitrova 2002) point out that 'Europe' as a reference point offered a safe blueprint of what the 'right order of priorities' for the post-1989 development should be. What is more, it revived old historical predispositions and dreams: as I argued earlier, the idea of Europe as a social and political model to emulate was central to the pre- and post-Ottoman period's 'modernisation' efforts of the Bulgarian intelligentsia. Their cultural campaign sought to replicate European models (ibid: 124–127), so much so, that, as Daskalov (1997, cited by Dimitrova 2002: 72) argues, "[e]specially at the early stage, modernisation was equated to 'Europeanization' and sometimes defined more generally as 'civilization'".

The appeal of the modernisation and the Europeanisation projects in Bulgaria need to further be understood in the context of a *'catch-up'* meta-narrative: the idea to catch up with the modern Western cultures. Szwat-Gylybowa (2014) argues that important aspects of catching up included voluntarism, agonicity and a teleological orientation. It is characterised by a linear conception of history, which expected that the past of the countries 'out in front' would repeat itself in the future of those lagging behind (ibid.: 311). In this way, Szwat-Gylybowa (2014) argues, the 'catch-up' narrative hinges on a conception of progress as infinite moral development and improvement (Krasnodebski 1991, cited by Szwat-Gylybowa 2014). In this sense, it can be seen as a 'self-colonising' (Kiossev 2011) ideologico-utopian construction: one that rests on authentic human longings for a better (more prosperous) tomorrow (via which it draws wide support), but which locks these in a fixed, predetermined pattern that fails to recognise and reflect local socio-economic and political conjunctures, and fails to engage the local 'popular collective will' (Gramsci 1971). It further imagines Western Europe as a homogenous and unambiguous entity, unmarred by social problems and antagonisms in the present – a state of affairs achieved only after overcoming such in the past; the latter, on its part, is then used to justify a call to suffer the 'growing pains' Western Europe has gone through in order to reach the bliss of its present. What is more, within this paradigm, the implied 'immaturity' carries stigma (Szwat-Gylybowa 2014), which is often reinforced and utilised by many intellectuals as a tool to exclude rival forms of thought and limit the scope of public debates about the direction and form of the post-socialist changes. The euphoric utopianism of the early 1990s and the later Euro-enthusiasm after 1997 then functioned to buttress the ideological construction of a (neo)liberal

conception of civil society, where the latter was reduced to the 'open', individualist, self-help society of 'associated' citizens (i.e. the hegemonic model dominant in Western Europe at the time).

From the utopian to the pragmatic, or from utopia to ideology: the neoliberalisation of civil society

Overall, we can be certain that despite its purported rejection of utopianism, East European post-1989 civil society was propelled by idealised visions of the future and of notions such as democracy, Europeanisation and morality (see also Ray 2009). There are, however, important nuances in the historical development of the notion of civil society during the period. The interesting case of Bulgaria shows that during the 1989–1997 period, the idea of civil society was constructed and construed in two different but related ways. The first conception established a utopian vision of civil society as a blueprint for a radically new (democratic, modern) society as the telos of the post-socialist transformation. This first vision, utilised by the dissident-intellectuals in 1989–90 could be seen as having drawn on two traditions of Western thought on civil society – that of the Scottish Enlightenment (and specifically Adam Ferguson's [1995] account), and that of Hegel. Inspired by the Scottish Enlightenment, civil society was customarily opposed to 'primitive' or 'traditional' (backward) society. In a very elitist manner, this discourse conceived civil society as comprising the 'energetic minority' of citizen-protesters, as opposed to the 'passive majority' of 'docile subjects' (who were deridingly cast as uncivil/communist society). Secondly, civil society was opposed to the 'state' or to 'political society' (in a Hegelian manner), which served to depoliticise the concept and firmly ground it in an anti-statist (and anti-communist) ideology. These two currents in their function corresponded to the two main tasks of the early transformational utopia, as imagined by the dissident-intellectuals – first, that of a project of modernisation, akin to a 'civilizational choice' (Huntington 1993), and second, the project of 'decommunisation' or that of the dismantling of the (repressive) state. Another important feature of particularly the earliest conceptualisation of civil society in Bulgaria, around 1989, was that in its initial deployment by dissident-reformers it acquired an elitist frame that could be argued to have had demobilising effects from the very start of the democratic changes. Later, in the run-up to Bulgaria's 1997 'revolution' events, the concept was utilised as a political weapon against the 'unreformed ex-communists'; that is, it was used strategically for the immediate needs of the troubled transitional project, by appealing for collective support from the 'wider public' which now needed to "grow into a civil society" and relegate Communism to the past.

This second conception brought about a pragmatic vision of civil society as 'associated citizens' (in the Tocquevillian sense), which developed into a neoliberal conception of the latter as a network of NGOs independent of, and stronger than, the state. This re-conceptualisation was carried out as part of the struggle for hegemony which the expert-intellectuals were engaged in. In some ways, they added another, narrower, articulation of civil society as the *techne* of the 'postcommunist transition' – where the

telos was an 'open' (modern, European) society. Whether seen as a telos or a techne of the democratic changes, however, 'civil society' was consistently discursively positioned in this frame as against 1) the state, both in its authoritarian (pre-1989) version, in its 1990–1997 'communist-interests-captured' version, as well as in its post-1997 collaborative role; and against 2) a 'passive majority of subjects (non-citizens)'.

We can thus recognise several ways in which utopian longings were exploited for ideological purposes during the period. These roughly correspond to three main tropes of the propagated version of civil society: civil society can provide an alternative to the state; the state constrains civil society's entrepreneurial potentials; and civil society is an alternative to the formal sphere of party politics (i.e. it is located beyond any left/right paradigms).

It is safe to assume that people struggling against an authoritarian regime longed for a sphere of voluntary and purposive collective action, as well as for emancipation and self-determination. The imposed 'commonsensical' form of civil society, however, constructed a 'free' subject (rather, 'citizen') who makes rational life choices and carries responsibility for the consequences of these. In this way, as Lemke (cited by Brown 2003) argues, citizens' lives become a matter of entrepreneurship – they are wholly responsible for their wellbeing, which hinges on making the right choices and 'investments' (of money, energy, etc). The neoliberal form of civil society entailed the production of the moral subject as an entrepreneurial subject (Brown 2003). Thus, the person longing for self-determination and emancipation (from the repressive state of the old regime) was interpellated as an entrepreneurial actor, who is a rational, calculating subject, whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for 'self-care' (ibid.). This ideal neoliberal citizen is also atomised and pragmatic in choosing among different social, political and economic options, rather than mobilising collectively with others to transform these.

The tendency to use the emotional appeal of civil society to promote neoliberal market policy prescriptions also resulted in the de-politicisation of the concept (Harris 2001). Conveniently ignored were the power relations underpinning civil society and the exclusions resulting from these. The new civil society organisations further pushed out other forms of political agency, such as social movements and collective mass mobilisations (Chandhoke 2010; see also Kabakchieva and Kurzydlowski 2012). What is more, the regularly imposed division between 'passive' and 'active' ('narod' vs. 'citizens') served to cover up and mask (economic) social inequalities, issues of power and domination. The people who increasingly possessed less political, symbolic and material power were finding themselves left out. The imposed model of civil society appeared to advance an elite agenda, which placed the urban middle classes (dubbed an 'active minority') as its top priority instead.

Key to not just the manufacture of consent, but to the mobilisation of appeal to the neoliberal ideology, as I have shown previously, was the emotional appeal to autonomy and self-determination inherent to the idea of civil society. The discourse of civil society was embedded, as I have shown previously, in two main utopian discourses. The first was the discourse of 'catching up', which involved a dream of modernisation (which in the case of Bulgaria dates back to country's

national revival period of eighteenth to nineteenth century). In this context, calls to define the European West's model of civil society (which in the 1990s had assumed a neoliberal form) as a universal model, and to mimic the 'enlightened Europeans', easily took root. The second ideologico-utopian discourse was the anti-communist discourse, which harboured dreams of retributive justice. One source of this fortunate fit between the neoliberal idea of civil society as an alternative to the state and as constitutive of the self-interested and self-sustaining individual was the delegitimisation of communist state ideology. The civil society paradigm claimed excellent congruency with the dispositions that characterised the changed ideological environment. Thus, the transition in Bulgaria was a project of modernisation, resting on the claim that Bulgarian society had to enter the era of modern (Western) bourgeois civilisation. As part of this, it constituted a 'civilizational choice' (Huntington 1993) between tradition and modernity, past and future, Eastern and Western values. The depth of the transformation aimed for was profound – it particularly targeted people's worldviews and their 'common sense'. However, consent to hegemony is never absolute (Carroll 2010: 174). What the post-2001 'populist wave' began to unravel is another wave of hegemonic struggle, whereby the idea of civil society as established between 1990 and 2001 was challenged and new re-articulations began to taking place. The fact that the new contestations were, and continue to be, frequently articulated within a nationalist discourse, however, was/is alarming, and I elaborate on this in my discussion of the 2013 collective mobilisations in the next chapter.

Notes

1 As Bondzhulov, Deyanov and Chalukov (2008: 230) note, this fact is frequently mentioned/noted, but rarely analysed in terms of its consequences for the postcommunist period.
2 For example, all dissident-intellectuals who initiated the Club for the Defense of *Glasnost* and *Preustroistvo* in the autumn of 1988 were long-standing members of BKP, and some of them even '*active fighters against fascism*' (an institutionalised title).
3 Having just emerged, and lacking experience, the new opposition looked for possible solutions and models from the now more experienced Central European dissidents, and particularly Poland, where a year earlier round table talks had led to success for the opposition which had already formed a government there. This inspired UDF to demand the same model of negotiations to take place in Bulgaria.
4 Apart from these two main players, there was a proliferation of new parties on both the left and the right, but the new political system effectively developed into a bipolar party system (with UDF and BSP as the main players) throughout the 1990s.
5 They now demanded the de-installation of all communist symbols from public buildings.
6 The term 'think-tank' had not been used in Bulgaria until 2011 when Dostena Lavergne, a Bulgarian anthropologist based in France, published an extensive study of the emergence and establishment of 'think-tanks' in Bulgaria.
7 For a detailed study of the transformation of these networks in Bulgaria, see Chalukov (2008).
8 As a consequence to which one-third of Bulgarian banks, which owned one-fourth of the system's assets, bankrupted.
9 As a consequence of the liberalisation of the export of grain (more was exported than what was allowed) and of the privatisation of the sector (the control over the quantities in the country was diminished).

10 For a discourse analysis of the 'perestroechna' ideology in Bulgaria, see Prodanov (2011).

11 In terms of texts' authors, Goffman (1981) differentiates between the 'principle' – the one whose position is put in the text, and the 'author' – the one who puts the words together and is responsible for wording.

12 During the regime, expulsion from the party constituted not simply a sanction, but rather a form of repression, which ejected that personality out of the public sphere and deprived them of the opportunity to communicate with the public. At the same time, however, an intellectual's expulsion from the party and criminalisation of their work used to increase their popularity and informally legitimise their public role (Hristova 2007).

13 For an analysis of these memoirs see Kalinova and Baeva (2011), especially pp. 419–420.

14 This idea of 'catching up' with the West is to a different extent present in the entire CEE region. See, for example, Zarycki (2014).

15 Covert because it was formally addressed to the Soviet 'bureaucracy' rather than to the Bulgarian one, but as with many texts at the time, it was read (and intended to be read) 'between the lines'.

16 Yet, it was certainly in conjunction with other powerful groups.

17 Tamas (1992) describes similar phenomena in Hungary, where the prominent position of the intellectual-dissidents as the opposition ensured that the agenda pursued was the one defined by them, and the ideas they propagated seldom resonated with ordinary people.

18 'The independent movements' Mishev refers to here are the dissident movements which appeared in 1988–1989.

19 In Czechoslovakia, the intellectuals were more explicitly dominant in the dissident movement.

20 Although many later observers would conceptualise the entire postcommunist bloc's changes as a 'passive revolution' (e.g. Ash 1999; Shields 2006), the Bulgarian 1989 might be considered a particularly poignant case.

21 The 'revolutionary' discourse, however, slowly dissolved in the following years. The events of 1989 were later remembered as 'the change', 'the changes', or 'the big changes' in Bulgaria.

22 I use 'utopia' here not in the Blochean sense of anticipating a better world/life, but in its literal meaning as 'an impossible place'.

23 Placard as seen on recordings of the protests, uploaded by Rupov (2011).

24 As many have argued in relation to this tendency in all countries of CEE, such a conception has been particularly disabling, as it pushed to an extreme degree the tendency to elevate civil society above the state (Hann 1990; Cohen and Arato 1994).

25 Since there was no organised internal (to BKP) or external dissident movement until the very last year before the formal collapse.

26 Yet, some research (e.g. Chalukov 2008; Hristov 2008) shows that within the economic sphere there were social groups who had been preparing for a gradual transformation from a state-planned to a capitalist economy, albeit within the realms of the socialist project.

27 The distinction I draw here between research spaces as knowledge-producers, and media – as knowledge-disseminators, is only analytical. In practice, of course, the two overlap.

28 The Scottish Enlightenment thinker Adam Ferguson (1995) conceptualised civil society as a civilised and polished society.

29 The nineteenth century American Alexis de Tocqueville (2003) conceptualised civil society as the sphere of organised non-political civic and commercial associations.

30 The contents were limited to articles with the following titles: 'The third sector in Bulgaria: statistics, trends, and events', 'The state and non-governmental organisations', 'The community of NGOs and the press: opportunities and challenges', 'Charity and financial

practices related to the Bulgarian non-governmental organisations: the 1996 experience',
and 'The Western assistance to the Bulgarian civil society' (Dainov et al. 1997).

31 This was important because, unlike their colleagues from Central Europe, Bulgarian
intellectuals engaged in very little, if any, dissident activity before 1989.

32 The phrase in Bulgarian here is used in the sense of 'plebeian'.

References

Aleksandrov, H. (2001). The patriarch, the 'we' generation, and the users [Patriarhut, Poko-
lenieto 'Nie' i Iuzarite]. *Kapital*, 1 September.

Althusser, L. (1976). *Essays in Self-Criticism*. Trans. Lock, G. London: New Left Books.

Angelova, P. (1998). Schengen and the Bulgarian civil society [Shengen i Bulgarskoto
Grazhdansko Obshtestvo]. *Kapital*, 1 August.

Ágh, A. (1993). *The social and political actors of democratic transition*. Hungarian Center
for Democracy Studies Foundation, Department of Political Science, Budapest Univer-
sity of Economics.

Ash, T. G. (1999). *We the People: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest,
Berlin and Prague*. 2nd edn. London: Granta Books/Penguin.

Beckman, B. (1993). The liberation of civil society: Neo-liberal ideology and political
theory. *Review of African Political Economy*, 58, 20–33.

Bergson, H. (2002). *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*. Pearson, K. A. and Mullarkey, J., eds.
London: Continuum Press.

Bernik, I. (1999). From imagined to actually existing democracy: Intellectuals in Slovenia.
In Bozoki, A., ed. *Intellectuals and Politics in Central Europe*. Budapest: Central Euro-
pean University Press, pp. 101–118.

Bloch, E. (1977). Nonsynchronism and the obligation to its dialectics. Trans. Ritter, M. *New
German Critique*, 11, 22–38.

Bundzhulov, A. Deyanov, D. and Chalukov. I., eds. (2008). The Nets of the Transition:
What Actually Happened in Bulgaria after 1989 [Mrezhite na Prehoda: Kakvo Vsusht-
nost se Sluchi v Bulgaria sled 1989g.]. Sofia: Iztok-Zapad.

Brannan, T. (2003). *From antipolitics to anti-politics: What became of east European civil
society*. (Working Paper No. 03–41). Development Studies Institute, London School of
Economics and Political Science. [Online].

Brown, W. (2003). Neo-liberalism and the end of liberal democracy. *Theory & Event*, 7(1), 1–25.

Carroll, W. K. (2010). Crisis, movements, counter-hegemony: In search of the new. *Inter-
face*, 2(2), 168–198.

Chalukov, I. (2008). The emancipation of the economy [Emantsipiraneto na ikonomikata].
In Bundzhulov, A., Deyanov, D. and Chalukov, I., eds. *The Nets of the Transition: What
Actually Happened in Bulgaria after 1989 [Mrezhite na Prehoda: Kakvo Vsushtnost se
Sluchi v Bulgaria sled 1989g]*. Sofia: Iztok-Zapad, pp. 117–200.

Chandhoke, N. (2007). Civil society. *Development in Practice*, 17(4–5), 607–614.

Cohen, J. L. and Arato, A. (1994). *Civil Society and Political Theory*. Cambridge, MA and
London: MIT Press.

Cox, R. W. and Sinclair, T. (1996). *Approaches to World Order*. Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press.

Dainov, E. (2000). *The Political Debate and the Transition in Bulgaria [Politicheskiyat
Debat i Prehodut v Bulgaria]*. Sofia: Bulgarian Science and Culture Foundation.

Dainov, E., ed. (2002). *Bulgaria in 21st Century: Where Are We Heading? [Bulgaria 21
Vek: Nakude Otivame?]*. Sofia: Centre for Social Practices.

Dainov, E., Krastev, I., Kiuranov, D., Milosheva, M., Rusanov, V., Stanchev, K. and Garnizov, V. (1997). *Initiative for the Support of Civil Society in Bulgaria [Initsiativa za Podkrepa na Grazhdanskoto Obshtestvo v Bulgaria]*. Sofia: Access Foundation.

Dakova, V. and Vukova, D. (2003). *The Bulgarian Nongovernmental Sector in the Context of Development [Bulgarskiyat Nepravitelstven Sektor v Konteksta na Razvitie]*. Sofia: Rabotilnitsa za Grazhdanski Initsiativi Foundation.

Daskalov, R. (1997). Ideas About, and Reactions to Modernization in the Balkans. *East European Quarterly*, 31(2): 141–180.

Deyanov, D. (2008). Legitimation: Technologies for taming the public opinion [Legitimatsiya – tehnologii na opitomiyavane na obshtestvenoto mnenie]. In Bundzhulov, A., Deyanov, D. and Chalukov, I., eds. *The Nets of the Transition: What Actually Happened in Bulgaria after 1989 [Mrezhite na Prehoda: Kakvo Vsushtnost se Sluchi v Bulgaria sled 1989g]*. Sofia: Iztok-Zapad, pp. 366–374.

Deyanova, L. (2000). The impossibility of a critical public space: Sociological and political science discourse in the media. In Lozanov, G., Deyanova, L. and Spassov, O., eds. *Media and Transition*. Sofia: Open Society, pp. 240–256.

Deyanova, L. (2008). The field of public opinion between 'the data factories' and 'the argument factories' [Poleto na obshtestvenoto mnenie mezhdu 'fabrikite za danni' i 'fabrikite za argumenti']. In Bundzhulov, A., Deyanov, D. and Chalukov, I., eds. *The Nets of the Transition: What Actually Happened in Bulgaria after 1989 [Mrezhite na Prehoda: Kakvo Vsushtnost se Sluchi v Bulgaria sled 1989g]*. Sofia: Iztok-Zapad, pp. 375–408.

Dimitrov, G. and Krasteva, A. (1998). Europe and the Constituting of Modern Bulgaria. In Bianchini, S. and Schöpflin, G. eds, *State Building in the Balkans: Dilemmas on the Eve of the 21st Century*. Ravenna: Longo Editore, pp. 123–135.

Dimitrova, G. (2002). The limits of Europeanisation: Hegemony and its misuse in the political field of Bulgaria. *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 2(2), 69–92.

Einhorn, B. (2005). Citizenship, civil society and gender mainstreaming: Contested priorities in an enlarging Europe. *Czech Sociological Review*, 41(6), 1023–1040.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge.

Ferguson, A. (1995). *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Fotev, G. (1992). *Civil Society [Grazhdanskoto obshtestvo]*. Sofia: BAN.

Ganev, V. (1997). Bulgaria's symphony of hope. *Journal of Democracy*, 8(4), 125–139.

Ganev, V. (2014). Bulgaria's year of civic anger. *Journal of Democracy*, 25(1), 33–45.

Gellner, E. (1994). *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and Its Rivals*. New York: Penguin Press.

Gerő, M. and Kopper, Á. (2013). Fake and dishonest: Pathologies of differentiation of the civil and the political sphere in Hungary. *Journal of Civil Society*, 9(4), 361–374.

Gitelman, Z. (1990). The roots of Eastern Europe's revolution. *Problems of Communism*, 39, 89–94.

Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of Talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Grabowska, M. (2003). The post-communist cleavage on the national and the local level in Poland. In Zarycki, T. and Kolankiewicz, G., eds. *Regional Issues in Polish Politics*. London: School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London, pp. 157–178.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Trans. Hoare, Q. and Smith, G. N., eds. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Hall, S. (1987). Gramsci and us. *Marxism Today*, June, 16.

Hanley, S. L. and Sikk, A. (2013). Economy, corruption or promiscuous voters? Explaining the success of Anti-Establishment Reform Parties in Eastern Europe. *ECPR General Conference, Bordeaux, 5–7 September 2013*.

Hann, C. M. (1990). *Market Economy and Civil Society in Hungary*. London: Cass.

Hann, C. M. and Dunn, E. (1996). *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models*. London: Routledge.

Harris, J. (2001). *Depoliticizing Development: The World Bank and Social Capital*. New Delhi: Leftword.

Havel, V. (1985). The power of the powerless. In Havel, V., ed. *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the State in Central-Eastern Europe*. London: Hutchinson.

Havel, V. (1988). Anti-political politics. In Keane, J., ed. *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives*. London: Verso Books.

Hemment, J. (1998). Colonization or liberation: The paradox of NGOs in postsocialist states. *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, 16(1), 43–58.

Hristov, I. (2008). The law of the transition [Pravoto na prehoda]. In Bundzhulov, A., Deyanov, D. and Chalukov, I., eds. *The Nets of the Transition: What Actually Happened in Bulgaria after 1989 [Mrezhite na Prehoda: Kakvo Vsushtnost se Sluchi v Bulgaria sled 1989g]*. Sofia: Iztok-Zapad, pp. 63–116.

Hristova, N. (2005). *The Specifics of the Bulgarian 'Dissidence': Power and Intelligentsia 1956–1989 [Spetsifika na Bulgarskoto 'Disidentstvo'. Vlast i Intelligentsia 1956–1989]*. Sofia: Letera.

Hristova, N. (2007). The myth of wide conformism: The Bulgarian intellectuals in the second half of 20th century [Mitut za vseobshtiat konformizym. Bulgarskite intelektualci prez vtorata polovina na XX vek]. *Monde Diplomatique*, February.

Hristova, N. (2011). Ot maskite do maskarada. Bulgarskite intelektualci v godinite na prehoda: sotsialna pamet za 'vchera', sotsialni roli za 'dnes'. In *Izsledvania po istoria na socializma v Bulgaria: Prehodut*. Sofia: Centar za istoricheski I politologicheski izsledvania, pp. 522–541.

Huntington, S. P. (1993). The clash of civilizations? *Foreign Affairs*, 22–49.

Ivancheva, M. (2007). *Civil society as a discursive frame: Vaclav Havel's anatomy of reticence as a case study*. Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology. Budapest: Central European University. MA Dissertation.

Ivancheva, M. (2014). Bulgaria has still not reached the bottom. *LeftEast* [Online], 20 October.

Ivanov, M. (2011). The beginning of the big change [Nachaloto na golyamata promyana]. In Znepolski, I., ed. *People's Republic of Bulgaria: From Beginning to End [NRB: Ot Nachaloto Do Kraya]*. Sofia: Siela.

Kabakchieva, P. (2001). *Civil Society against the State [Grazhdanskoto Obshtestvo Sreshtu Durzhavata]*. Sofia: Lik.

Kabakchieva, P. and Kurzydlowski, D. (2012). *Civil Society in Bulgaria: NGOs versus Spontaneous Civic Activism*. Sofia: Open Society Institute.

Kalinova, E. and Baeva, I. (2010). *The Bulgarian Transitions 1939–2010 [Bulgarskite Prehodi 1939–2010]*. Sofia: Paradigma.

Kalinova, E. and Baeva, I. (2011). *Socialism in the Mirror of the Transition [Sotsializmut v Ogledaloto na Prehoda]*. Sofia: Iztok-Zapad.

Kiossev, A. (2011). The self-colonizing metaphor. *Atlas of Transformation* [Online].

Kolakowski, L. (1971). A pleading for revolution: A rejoinder to Z. Bauman. *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, 12(1), 52–60.

Kolarova, R. and Dimitrov, D., eds. (2004). *The Round Table: Minutes (3 January–15 May 1990) [Kruglata Masa: Stenografski Protokoli (3 iyanuari–15 mai 1990)]*. Sofia: IK Biblioteka 48.

Konrad, G. (1984). *Antipolitics*. London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Kopecký, P. and Mudde, C. (2003). *Uncivil Society: Contentious Politics in Post-Communist Europe*. London: Routledge.

Krasnodębski, Z. (1991). *Upadek idei postępu*. Warszawa: PIW.

Krastev, I. (1999). *Think Tanks and The Invisible Hand of Transition*. National Institute for Research Advancement [Online].

Kumar, K. (1991). *Utopia*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Kumar, K. (2001). *1989: Revolutionary Ideas and Ideals*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Lavergne, D. (2010). *The Experts of the Transition: Bulgarian Think Tanks and the Global Networks of Influence [Ekspertite na prehoda: Bulgarskite think-tanks i globalnite mreji za vlianie]*. Sofia: Iztok-Zapad.

Medarov, G. (2013). Between (anti)authoritarianism and democracy: The possibility for a liberal authoritarianism. *Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, Faculty of Philosophy's Sociology Annual*, 104, 7–28.

Michnik, A. (1985). *Letters from Prison and Other Essays*. London: University of California Press.

Nikolchina, M. (2012). *The Voice of the Intellectual? [Glasut na Intelektualetsa?], Minutes Taken of Debate*. Sofia: The Red House, 26 June 2012.

Ost, D. (1996). Polish labor before and after solidarity. *International Labor and Working-Class History*, (50), 29–43.

Penev, B. (1924). Our intelligentsia [Nashata Inteligentsiya]. *Zlatorog*, 1.

Popivanov, B. (2004). What is civil society and can it take root in Bulgaria? [Shto e to grazhdansko obshtestvo i ima li to pochva u nas?]. *Kultura*, 18, 10–11.

Popper, K. S. (2011). *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. London and New York: Routledge.

Prodanov, V. (2011). The intelligentsia and the ideological discourse of the transformation from state socialism to periphery and oligarchic capitalism [Inteligentsiata i ideologicheskiyat diskurs na transformaciyata ot darzhaven sotsializum kum periferen i oligarhichen kapitalizum]. In *Studies of the History of Socialism in Bulgaria: The Transition [Izsledvania po Istoria na Sotsializma v Bulgariya: Prehodut]*. Sofia: Centre for Historical and Political Research, pp. 485–522.

Ray, L. (2009). At the end of the post-communist transformation? Normalization or imagining utopia? *European Journal of Social Theory*, 12(3), 321–336.

Roth, K. (1997). Between modernization and traditionalism: Everyday culture in the Southeast European village [Mezhdu modernizatsiya i tranditsionalizum. Vsekidnevnata kultura na seloto v Iugoiztochna Evropa]. *Bulgarski Folklor*, 3–4, 26–38.

Rupov, M. (2011). *The City of Truth [Gradut na Istinata]*. [YouTube Video].

Sampson, S. (2003). From forms to norms: Global projects and local practices in the Balkan NGO scene. *Journal of Human Rights*, 2(3), 329–337.

Shields, S. (2006). How the East was won: Transnational social forces and the neoliberalisation of Poland's post-communist transition. *Global Society*, 22(4), 445–468.

Shields, S. (2015). The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development as organic intellectual of neoliberal common sense in post-communist transition. In: Park, S. and Strand, J. R. eds. *Global Economic Governance and the Development Practices of the Multilateral Development Banks*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 167–186.

Snow, D. A. and Benford, R. D. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26, 611–639.

Spasova, K. (2014). The heritage of the unicorns: Ars Theoria II [Nasledstvoto na ednorozite. Ars Theoria II]: Review of The lost unicorns of the revolution [Izgubenite ednorozi na revoliutsiyata], Meglena Nikolchina. *Literaturen Vestnik*.

Szwat-Gylybowa, G. (2014). *'Playing Catch-Up': The Notion of Needing to Accelerate a Country's Progress towards a Civilised Paradise: The Bulgarian Version (a Proposed Entry for a Dictionary of Peregrinating Ideas)*. Institute of Slavic Studies, Polish Academy of Sciences.

Tamás, G.M. (1992). Socialism, Capitalism, and Modernity. *Journal of Democracy*, 3(3), 60–74.

Tocqueville, A. de (2003). *Democracy in America*. Vol. 10. Washington, D.C.; Regnery Publishing.

Trencsényi, B. (2014). Beyond liminality? The Kulturkampf of the early 2000s in East Central Europe. *Boundary 2*, 41(1), 135–152.

UDF Memorandum of Constitution [Uchreditelna Deklaratsiya na SDS] (1990). *Democracy*, 12 February 1990.

Zarycki, T. (2014). *Ideologies of Eastness in Central and Eastern Europe*. BASEES /Routledge Series on Russian and East European Studies. Number 96. Oxon: Routledge.

Zlatkov, T. (1996). Are we moving towards a civil society? [Dvizhim li se kum grazhdansko obshtestvo?]. *Otvoreno Obrazovanie*, 3, 35–47.

Znepolski, I. (1999). Rural culture and civil society [Selska Kultura i Grazhdansko Obshtestvo]. *Kapital*, 9 January.

5   Against the liberal consensus

A civil society of the people

In the previous chapter I outlined some key features of the dominant political discourses in Bulgaria and in CEE in the 1990s – as articulated around the projects of *decommunisation* (or purging of the burden of the totalitarian past) and *modernisation* (or catching up with the West on a course to a liberal democratic future). During the first decade after 1989 the two dominant discourses which structured these two projects – the *anti-communist* and the *capitalist*[1] discourses – attempted to fix the transitional web of meanings through the constitution of nodal points[2] such as liberal democracy, free market economy, and civil society, which gained a hegemonic position in the politico-economic speech in Bulgaria specifically between 1997 and the beginning of the 2000s. The nodal point of identity which came from identification with the anti-communist and pro-capitalist subject position was given meaning through chains of equivalence that linked together notions (or signifiers) such as the 'free and self-determined citizen', 'civil society member', 'entrepreneur', 'responsible individual' and so on. This chain of equivalence played a vital role in the formation of a liberal-capitalist (and an anti-communist) group identity, and with it, in the construction of the myth of the 'transition', which developed out of the dislocations of the 1989 political changes. Thus, in the 1990s the 'free-market liberal democracy' (liberal-capitalist) vision of social order which acquired a hegemonic position can be argued to have reached the level of a social imaginary – 'a horizon'[3] imagined in universal terms, despite serving particularistic interests. As I showed in the previous chapter, the hegemonic apparatuses of the civil society, which came to be understood as a network of intellectuals and experts in NGOs during the 'transitional' years, substituted the image of the repressed person (under state socialism) with the image of the independent and self-responsible individual, turning the human longing for liberty and spontaneity (which were lacking during the state socialist regimes) into ideals of entrepreneurial freedoms, grounded in individualistic self-interest – all wrapped in the discourse of the projects of 'decommunisation' and 'modernisation'.

Also in the previous chapter, following Gramsci, I saw part of the group of intellectuals, many themselves residing in NGOs, as the 'midwife' of these changes, or as those who provided the ideological coherence, legitimacy and solutions to what the perceived 'problems' of the (collapsed) social order after 1989 were. Thus, throughout the 'transition', vastly different sections of the post-socialist societies

consistently acquiesced to, and often actively supported, an ideology that often did not represent them and worked against their interests[4] (see, e.g., Ost 2000). In other words, in terms of their political articulation, the chain of equivalence which allowed for the constitution of the liberal-capitalist narrative as a social imaginary seemed to have dissolved the boundaries between different social groups and interests by relating them to the common project of the 'transition' to a free market economy and liberal democracy. In doing so, it established a dual frontier to define the forces to be opposed: a conspicuous *adversary without* – the (former) communist power-holders, and a vaguely defined *adversary within* – the 'irresponsible' and 'passive' mass of 'the people', susceptive to communist ideology.[6] Consequently, a dichotomisation of political space took root in the 1990s – a liberal imaginary division of the social into two opposing 'camps' – the anti-communists versus the communists, and the 'self-reliant liberal citizen' versus the 'dependent masses' (frequently referred to as 'subjects', non-citizens). This imagined dichotomisation, however, began to produce its own effects and to operate in a much more complex ideological environment in the following decade.

As I suggested towards the end of the previous chapter, in Bulgaria, at the beginning of the 2000s the 'field of discursivity'[7] (Torfing 1999) began to let the articulation of a variety of rival discourses – the dominant discourses of decommunisation, liberal democracy and free market economy became increasingly fragmented and contested by the discourses of so-called '*populism*', *nationalism* and, more recently, *anti-austerity*. It can be argued that during the 2000s then we witnessed the decline of a hegemonic discourse (which had temporarily functioned as a social imaginary, as a 'horizon' [Laclau 1990]) – into a discourse struggling for hegemony: "a mythical space which strives to survive in the political arena" (Celik 2000: 201). In this shift from a universal social imaginary back to a particularistic myth, the logic of difference (Laclau 1990) dissolved the illusion of unanimity amongst different social groups (and their interests), engendering a more complex and more poignant articulation of social divisions and conflict. Articulating the 1990s' ideological dichotomisation of 'we, the liberal citizens' versus 'them, the communist power-holders' became difficult to sustain, as 'we, the liberal citizens' was no longer a unified homogenous group – different factions came to constitute and articulate themselves along the lines of (anti-)communism, (anti-)populism, (anti-)liberalism; in addition, many of these newly fragmented groups no longer saw the enemy as a homogenous ('communist') elite either. This ideological fragmentation in Bulgaria transpired gradually during the late 2000s and, this book proposes, culminated in 2013. Similar dynamics took place in other East European countries, and I shall frequently refer to these in the analysis; yet, the major analytical focus shall fall on the Bulgarian case.

The year 2013 saw the longest and probably the most widespread protest mobilizations in Bulgaria since 1989. These consisted of two 'waves' – one in February through March and one which started in June and lasted a year. The first wave started over abnormally high electricity bills (sometimes several times higher than normal). The protesters blamed the foreign-owned privatised energy distribution companies for the price hike and called for their nationalisation; they also blamed

the political class for 'betraying' the interests of the people and demanded radical changes to the political system (in favour of a more direct form of democracy). Having organised themselves mostly online on social networking sites such as Facebook, thousands of people took to the streets of larger cities as well as smaller towns. The protests resulted in the resignation of the centre-right government (GERB)[8]. Interim elections held in May produced an opposition-led coalition government composed of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), and the liberal Movement for Rights and Liberties (MRF), informally known as the party representing Bulgaria's Turkish minority.[9] Just a month into its mandate, the new government took a very controversial decision to appoint Delyan Peevksi, a shady figure widely suspected of corruption on an enormous scale, to the position of chief of the State Agency for National Security (DANS). This triggered an immediate and immense reaction of moral indignation which, after a quick organisation online, spilled out onto the streets of major cities. Once again, tens of thousands marched daily to protest the controversial appointment and what they saw as 'coalescence between politicians and mafia' in the country. Despite the daily protests, the government stayed in power for a year and finally resigned in July 2014, putting an end to this second wave of street protests. New interim elections were then held in October 2014 which produced a government coalition between GERB, the Reform Bloc (a group of conservative right and centre-right parties which joined together into a 'bloc' during the Summer protests), the nationalist 'Patriotic Front', and the centre-left ABV.[10]

In this chapter and the next, I suggest that in addition to a struggle against power-holders (where grievances were directed at the political and economic elites), the protest mobilizations of 2013 also represent a culmination of a struggle for hegemony among different visions for social change: primarily between the once hegemonic liberal-capitalist ideological vision, now attacked by an up-surging (national-)popular articulation. In essence, both ideological 'camps' were engaged in contention with political and economic power-holders who were perceived as opportunistic and corrupt, and in this sense, both were 'dominated' groups.[11] Yet, they also clashed over disagreements such as who the enemy is, how they should be fought, and who shall fight them. That is, all (protesting) groups of interest here agreed change is desired, but were engaged in hegemonic struggles over whose project for social change should become hegemonic (i.e. a 'universal social imaginary – a 'horizon'). The confrontation, I argue, can best be seen in the antagonistic discourses of the Winter and the Summer protest waves of 2013. In their mobilisation against political and economic elites, the Winter protest wave made a counter-hegemonic attempt to challenge the liberal-capitalist discourse of the transition's organic intellectual elite (the 'expert' intellectuals described in the previous chapter) by articulating a popular-national political identity. The latter's organic expert-intellectuals then responded first with intense criticism and mockery of the Winter protests and a refusal to 'join in' the latter's protest, despite the common 'enemy without' (corrupt power-holders); and later by attempting to re-assert the hegemony of their liberal-capitalist vision during the Summer protest wave, which they sought to dominate.

Bulgaria's Winter 2013: the protest of the subalterns

In the following pages, the focus shall fall on the political discourse during the Bulgarian Winter protest only. I will first discuss textual fragments which textured the Winter mobilisation, followed by a study of the discourses of the latter's critics. My analysis of the texts, involves 1) reading them in terms of the three aspects of meaning – *action (genre), representation (discourses), identification (styles)* – and how these are realised in the various features of the texts (their vocabulary, their grammar, etc.);[12] 2) how (and to what effect) are the different representations and identities articulated together in the texts; and 3) how these texts and discourses relate to other texts and discourses both within and beyond the protest event.

The Winter protests: a civil society 'of the people'

February and March 2013 saw thousands of people across the country, including in the hitherto silent small-town Bulgaria, rally behind slogans calling for the nationalisation of energy companies and an 'end' to poverty, unemployment, low pay. Although the protest stayed relatively peaceful, there were some violent clashes, seven people committed self-immolation as a form of protest, and the overall tone of the protest can be described as particularly angry and bitter. The immediate trigger were abnormally high electricity prices, but the 'irruption' of the protest was precipitated by multiple factors which can be briefly summarised as including austerity measures implemented by the centre-right government over the preceding three years, recent fuel price hikes, a strong widespread disappointment with, and distrust in, political elites, and long-lasting disillusionment with the outcomes of the 'transition'. Some of the most popular banners seen on the demonstrations which summarised these demands included 'For a dignified life in Bulgaria', 'Security and Future in Bulgaria', 'Enough [with] Lies! Enough [with] Poverty! It Is Time For Change!' The mobilisation also quickly broadened its initial economic demands and called for the abolition of political representation and political parties in favour of a more direct form of democracy. Large groups of people declared they no longer believed in political parties and desired to 'take power into their own hands'. Slogans along these lines included: 'No to Parties and [No] to Monopolies', 'Down Go the Mafia. Power in Citizens' [hands]' and 'End to the Illusions. Self-governance. Activeness Every Day'. 'Real democracy' and 'representative democracy' appeared as an oxymoron in the language of the protests – the latter did not seem to satisfy people's criteria for genuine democracy any longer. Protesters also formed 'citizen councils' which were characterised by a horizontal ('internet-like') structure; on online forums they further initiated grassroots drafting of a new constitution which reflected their demands for political system change. In this sense, this protest could be seen as a radical call for inclusion, or for 'counting' in Ranciére's terms. In their rejection of the logic of representation, they articulated a notion of civil society that overlaps with 'the people' (Tsoneva and Medarov 2014). Drawing on Tsoneva (2013a; 2013b) and Nikolova, Tsoneva and Medarov (2014), I shall from now on refer to this as a 'civil society of the people'.

Some very specific demands were put on the table via various declarations sent to the country's president and via media. Key among these included: changing the electoral system from a proportional to a majoritarian system,[13] as well as introducing 'citizen quotas' in major institutions; cutting the number of MPs and ridding them of parliamentary immunity, and introducing a legal mechanism for their deselection; legal action (and imprisonment) for the 'perpetrators of the transition'; as well as a series of demands related to the energy sector, such as the nationalisation of energy distribution companies, the declassification of contracts between the state and energy-producers so these become public and hence more transparent, and legal action against state representatives who have signed contracts which run against the interests of the state.

Many of these demands and slogans were seen by cultural and intellectual elites as 'dangerously populist' and too reminiscent of 'communism'. Since the language of these protests also seemed to draw on a collectivist and communitarian, rather than on an individualist, liberal ethos, they were commonly framed (in media and by intellectual elites) as a backward- and Eastward-looking[14]*populist uprising*. Before moving on to explore the liberal intellectual attack the latter were subjected to, however, in the following discussion I offer a detailed account of the key elements of the February protest's *order of discourse* – its key discourses (representations), genres (actions) and styles (identities) (Fairclough 2003).

The 'people's civil society's order of discourse: genres, discourses, styles

One could distinguish in the discourse of the 'popular' protest a genre chain (Fairclough 2003: 32) that consisted of what we can call a *revolutionary-liberation agitprop* and *conspiracy theorising*. The texts in each of these genres entailed different but significantly overlapping and interconnected discourses, among which key, or nodal, discourses emerged to be those of 'freedom' (or rather 'liberation'), 'awakening', 'united-ness' and 'morale'. The social relations which these genres then appeared to establish were those of 'unification' and collaboration based on a higher, collective goal (of collective struggle) grounded in the moral ethos of the nation. In this sense, we can think of it as a 'national-popular' discourse community. Particular *styles*, or identities, emerged during the discursive enactments of these social relations – we can summarise those as *'patriots'*, *'freedom-fighters'* and *'alert and wilful citizens'*. In the following discussion I explore these in more detail.

REVOLUTIONARY-LIBERATION AGITPROP: KEY DISCOURSES AND STYLES

Before and during the Winter protests, the online public space abounded with what we might call 'revolutionary agitprop', the central (nodal) discourse of which was 'revolution', or the need for one. This discourse was enacted in viral agitprop made up of diverse genre formats such as short social impact films, short political tracts, revolutionary poems (both historical – from Bulgaria's nineteenth century

liberation struggles from the Ottoman Empire, as well as contemporary), photo collages and caricatures, revolutionary songs (again both historical and contemporary), and so on. These got viral – 'liked', 'shared' and discussed by hundreds, often thousands of people, on social networking sites.

The 'agitprop' which circulated widely during the protests carried a high emotional charge and abounded in revolutionary enthusiasm. The latter was channelled along two main discursive lines – an economic and a moral-nationalist line – which corresponded to the two key 'enemies' at whom protesters pointed an accusatory finger and against whom they directed their grievances: 'monopolies' and 'politicians'; these discourses often merged and an 'arch-enemy' transpired – '*the politico-economic mafia*', as illustrated in this post on a protest group's Facebook page:

> ATTENTION! THE POLITICO-ECONOMIC MAFIA ROBS YOU EVERY DAY, EVERY HOUR, EVERY MINUTE, EVERY SECOND. THIS HAPPENS NOT ONLY THROUGH THE BANK SYSTEM. THINK ABOUT IT! . . .
> [capital letters in original]

In addition, the struggle against the enemy was articulated as a radical rejection *in toto*: the entire political class – "all politicians who have been in power for the past twenty years" – were discursively renounced as traitor and as having irreparably compromised their trustworthiness, or as another Facebook post on a protesting group had it:

> Bulgaria is in an urgent need of civic disobedience!!! 'There need to be lynch!!! There need to be a scourge!!! There need to be a brand new parliament building with brand new members in it!!!

This short fragment also illustrates the recurring motif of the 'transition' as a crime, and the corollary that justice must be served – with the perpetrators' narratives cast down and the losers' vindicated. The post-1989 period of 'transition' was clearly experienced as infused with suffering, personal and collective tragedies and failure – it is experienced as a 'crime' that must be redeemed; at the same time, it holds 1989's unfulfilled dreams for a better tomorrow – "traces of unrealised hopes and potentials, which could have been and can yet be" (Kellner 1997: 81) – both symbolised in the image of the scourge which is to carry out the lynch. The Blochian utopian surplus here is meant to "restore that which had been beaten to the ground or deprived of recognition in its day, and justice will now be done" (Bloch 1988: 48).

Returning to the two main discursive lines, as part of the economic line of the construction of the enemy, the most common lexicalization was 'plunderers' [grabiteli]. The appellation 'plunderers' struck a responsive chord among large groups of protesters as it reflected a common understanding of the state of post-1989 Bulgaria as gradual but relentless impoverishment. As one large-size placard at the demonstration read 'Enough [with] Capitalism. Enough [with] Plundering'. Along with an economic line, a second and more popular construction of the enemy – the 'politico-economic mafia' – was devised in moral-national terms. The most common lexicalizations here included: 'traitors' [predateli], 'enemies of

Bulgarian-ness' [vragove na bulgarshtinata], 'national apostates' [rodootstupnitsi], referring to the entire political class. It is important to note that the distinction I make between an economic and a moral-national line is only for analytical purposes, in reality these discourses merged – it was the 'plunderers' who were 'traitors' and 'national apostates'. It would further be reasonable to argue that the economic line more often than not got submerged under the moral-national one. In other words, the economic (mostly anti-capitalist) narrative was subtly integrated into a nationalist discourse, the consequences of which I shall elaborate on later.

The national-moral revolutionary discourse seemed to carry a higher emotional intensity. It trumpeted a cavalry charge, raising emotions to a higher pitch, so as to inspire individuals to be united with a larger group – that of the nation. Dozens of widely-circulated collages invited people to join the street protests. For example, to invite people on street demonstrations on the next day, some collages would feature a caption that reads: "Tomorrow, they will watch over us! Tomorrow is the day to show them they did not die in vain!" next to portraits of the most revered national heroes (revolutionaries of Bulgaria's struggle for liberation from the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century), often accompanied with the national flag and the image of a lion as the heraldic symbol of Bulgaria and a symbol of power and bravery. A key discourse in these and other protest agitprop is then the *celebration of history* – of past acts of heroism and bravery during Bulgaria's liberation struggles in the nineteenth century. Thus, rallying cries of Bulgaria's nineteenth century freedom-fighters such as '*Liberty or Death*' and '*For a Pure and Holly Republic*' circulated around the internet and got printed on protest placards in February–March 2013. In addition to the agitprop online and on placards, the protest crowd also sang revolutionary songs from those times, such as 'Rise up, rise up, Balkan hero' [Stani stani yunak balkanski] and 'The Fight Begins' [Boyat nastana]. It appears that the liberation struggles of the nineteenth century provided an important source of inspiration and faith in one's own agency (capacity to impact the social environment). A further common lexicalization of the 'enemy' reflects this overlap between nineteenth century liberation struggles and today's protests: the 'politico-economic mafia' was frequently referred to as, literally, the 'enslaver' (oppressor [porobitel]) – in the same way as the Ottomans were referred to back in the nineteenth century. The memory of heroism in the national liberation struggles, in other words, seemed to be able to turn belonging to a nation into willpower – one becomes not only a 'national', but also an heir to 'liberty fighters' and hence an agent in the historical evolution (and emancipation) of the national community, as a generator of legacies for generations to come. The following example of nineteenth century revolutionary poetry appropriated (circulated around Facebook) for the purposes of the Winter protest is illustrative:

> Wake up, [you] backward tribe!
> Are you living, are you dying, you don't even know!
> There's a whole posterity coming after you
> What are you to bequeath to them?
> —Ivan Vazov (1883)[15]

In this way, drawing on the national liberation struggles for inspiration for these protests meant that the struggle often appeared to be articulated in ethno-nationalist terms: the fight for liberation was often ethnocentric (a fight to free 'ourselves' – ethnic Bulgarians from an ethnic 'Other' – the Turks). The way 2013's Winter protests received an ethnocentric twist could also be observed directly within the protest crowd which sometimes chanted 'You're Turkish' and 'Enichari'[16] when referring to politicians and monopolies. Yet, it is very important to note that here "You're Turkish!" and "Enichari" were directed at both Bulgarian and non-Bulgarian targets (such as Bulgarian politicians, and foreign-owned energy companies), and the former essentially meant 'you are oppressors and traitors', irrespective of the latter's ethnicity. Thus, explanations for the use of ethnically exclusionary rhetorical means cannot be fully exhausted with an account of these as xenophobic or racist. There is a fine but significant difference between racial and ethnic fantasies for national rebirth that in the case of the Winter mobilisations can also be thought of in terms of a misplaced anti-imperialist impulse. What is more, it was during the Winter protest wave that a number of Roma communities went on the street to join the protest – something that, as I will show later, failed to happen at the self-proclaimed liberal protest in the summer of 2013. Yet, it is important to acknowledge that the discourses of protesters on social networking sites abounded with some radically exclusionary statements – mostly against the Roma, who often got the blame, along with politicians and energy companies, for a wide range of social ills. This is why I explore the problem in more detail as follows.

This displacement needs to be understood as something much more complex than a simple illustration of 'false consciousness'. It is easy (as it was common) to dismiss the nationalistic twist of many of the Winter protest discourses as driven by ideological 'mystification' made possible by the 'irrationality' of 'uneducated masses' – as I will illustrate in the next section, the media and intellectuals' critique of the protest utilised precisely this sort of explanatory frame. Yet, in line with Ernst Bloch's insights, I want to challenge the reader to envisage a wider conception of rationality – one that takes from practical reason what first appears as 'irrational' and rationalises it, instead of eliminating it; in other words, giving a positive account of 'irrationality' by taking the world-informed character of protesters' subjective experience seriously,[17] and discerning the utopian component in practical reason (Hudson 2013: 30–31). In the following discussion, with the help of Bloch (as well as Gramsci), I outline an interpretation that highlights the diachronicity of the contradictions inherent to the mixing of past collective memories of suffering and struggle with the present experiences of adversity and hope, which can (at least partly) account for what appeared as ethno-exclusionary rhetoric in the Winter protest.

The integration of anti-capitalist sentiments generated by present conditions into nationalist narratives rooted in past experiences of political subjugation can be seen as illustrating what Bloch called a *nonsynchronous* contradiction – the dissonance of specific modes of thinking and objects of hate (Bloch 1977) which can be tied to past modes of consciousness at the same time as being tied to the present. Gramsci too referred to such contradictions in terms of the sedimentation of distinct (both

temporally and in terms of substance) ideologies and (individual and community) life experiences. To Bloch, the concept of non-synchronism with the present (or *non-contemporaneity*) refers to a proposal that residues from the past continue to be productive in the present, even when they appear obsolete and historically surpassed (Kellner 1997: 94). Older ways of thinking, as well as archaic objects of hate, such as the image of the Ottoman oppressor, break through the present and become once again potent. Particularly key to understanding specifically the anti-Turkish rhetoric of some protesters in February is the trope of suffering: suffering during Ottoman times seemed to frequently (implicitly or explicitly) be equated to suffering during the country's post-1989 'transition', hence requiring equally radical acts of heroism and willpower to rebel and fight the 'oppressors'. In Benjamin's (1976, cited in Rabinbach 1977: 8) words (in reference to Bloch's work), images of the past recur in the Now, becoming actual for the present. The memory of collective suffering helped the revolutionary agitation instil a sense in which since the plight was collective, the redemption will be collective as well. Thus, despite being rooted in an outdated confrontation (between Bulgarians and Ottomans), the ethno-nationalism in the popular discourse of the February protests in 2013 hinged upon a need of reassurance that feelings of defeat and degradation associated with the past two decades of 'transition' can be superseded through immersion in collective action. Hence, despite acknowledging the discursive practices of mobilising around a concept of the nation as rooted in common ancestry and ethnic bonds, which by definition entails the ethnic exclusion of others (such as Turkish and Roma), the ethno-nationalist sentiments here need to be understood as also a utopian longing for belonging, solidarity (in suffering) and collective willpower for social change.

What is further important is that this non-synchronism, Bloch argues, highlights elements from the past which recognise and imagine (potentially emancipatory) alternatives to the status quo of today. History, to Bloch, stores utopian moments and thus the obsolete can still have a utopian charge in the present. What emerges from many of these texts seems to suggest that not only was collective memory of subjugation and humiliation in the past experienced as linked to a sense of subjugation and humiliation in the present, but the emancipatory drive from those past struggles continued to carry equally strong utopian charge for struggle for an alternative future/present. The revolutionary-liberation discourse comprised romantic, salvationist, and redemptive components: deprived of statehood under Ottoman rule, Bulgarians held an idealised imaginary of the national community unified by stories of pre-Ottoman greatness of statehood, conceiving of the nation in romantic-nationalist terms – as a moral entity. Such nationalism then passionately believed in the brotherhood of some nations, and animosity of others, as well as in the potentially ethical nature of politics, whereby it is possible to put an (abrupt) end to political misbehaviour. In this way, the constellation of symbols, emotions and ideas which embodied the nationalist rhetoric against the 'politico-economic mafia' seemed to offer redemptive language of liberation and regained dignity. This discourse carried meanings of reassessment of the post-1989 'transition', most vividly expressed in the slogan 'Re-assessment of the Transition and Prosecution of the Perpetrators'; it also carried meanings of re-orientation, often

challenging the 'blind' following of a pro-Western, and specifically pro-US foreign policy, as well as meanings of repair (restoration) of an imagined past dignity (as when 'the people' was 'united' and fought for freedom from Ottoman rule) and a regeneration or a revival of something that has been lost during the 'transition' – a sense of self-respect and self-determination. In this sense, in the ethno-nationalist patterns of this protest's discourse we can distinguish the progressive, 'gold-bearing rubble' (Bloch) of a driving force of emancipatory struggle – a dream of collective emancipation which can be a source for human pride.

Essential to understanding the nationalist twist of the February protest is then such a Blochian focus on the simultaneous presence of elements derived from both the present-day social order, and from past orders, which despite being obsolete, still retain ideological power. That is, along with criticising the ethnocentric (nationalist) patterns of the Winter protest discourse, we should not ignore the smuggling of the past into the present, or in Bloch's words, "the future in a past, which speaks to us and presents us with tasks" (cited by Rabinbach 1977), empowering subaltern groups to struggle, that we should take the 'energy' of the protest seriously, its language full of pathos "which does not just come from despair and ignorance" (Bloch, p. 19) (i.e. the way the protest's critics have it [see next section]), "but rather from the uniquely stirring power of belief" (ibid.) in one's own (collective) agency. In this way, although the obsolete object of hate – the Turk (or generally, the ethnic Other) – is undoubtedly 'irrational' (rooted in a non-synchronist contradiction) and has to be challenged, the emotional drive for justice against the figure of the oppressor and the energy stirring such hate is authentic and has to be taken seriously and understood. In short, the outdated ethnocentric sentiments inherent to a significant part of the national-popular discourse can be seen as not merely rooted in irrational (xenophobic) drives which must be repressed, but also in the genuine (and rational) longing for commonality and emancipation – the Blochian 'utopian surplus', which carries significant revolutionary potential.

CONSPIRACY THEORISING: KEY DISCOURSES (NARRATIVES) AND STYLES

Despite the national-popular rhetoric, however, many texts of the Winter protest eschewed the collective pronoun 'we' (which functions to accentuate that both the plight and the redemption are collective) and instead often abounded with the injunctive 'you' and the edifying 'they'. We can see this in one of the examples provided: "[T]HE POLITICO-ECONOMIC MAFIA ROBS YOU EVERY DAY, EVERY HOUR, EVERY MINUTE, EVERY SECOND. . . .", or in another Facebook post of a protest group, where the author first establishes the situation with an authoritative (objective, edifying) "the Bulgarian is. . . ." situating him/herself outside of the collectivity, but then finishes off with an injunction inviting collective action, this time using the first person plural (positioning him/herself within the collectivity):

> At the moment, the Bulgarian is downtrodden and hungry, and, what is most dangerous, spiritually exhausted. The enemies of Bulgarian-ness are exhilarated, [national] apostates are ever multiplying.
> Let us start to love our homeland once again!

Such formulations abounded in the revolutionary-liberation agitprop of the Winter protest, and might be linked to another key genre common for its national-popular rhetoric – *conspiracy theorising* – since authors and supporters of conspiracy narratives tend to perceive themselves as privy, 'in the know' of how 'things actually work', which places them outside of, and on a 'knowing' high ground to the misled masses. A look into the conspiracy thinking of the national-popular rhetoric might help explain then why 'they' and 'you' figured as much as 'we' in an otherwise strongly collectivist revolutionary agitprop. The conspiracy theorising tendencies of the February protest were also subject to a fierce attack (just as much as their nationalist features) from liberal intellectuals (discussed in the next section), so I look at these discourses next.

One of the most widely shared conspiracy narratives was the so-called 'Rahn-Utt Plan'. The narrative begins like this:

> 20 years ago Bulgaria was an averagely developed European country with highly developed economy, strong army and enviable social welfare. Today, all of this has been destroyed by plan [. . .] The Plan for the Destitution of Bulgaria. Rahn-Utt Project, 1990. This is the practical plan by which all governments of Bulgaria since 1990 have executed the destitution. Without acquainting themselves with this fundamental document, Bulgarians would not be able to understand the world around them and the epoch in which they live . . . [The plan] was devised by the organizers of the 10th November 1989's coup d'état from the United States Chamber of Commerce, in secrecy from the entire Bulgarian people. Since as early as March-August 1990 with this document all future developments in our economic and social life were predetermined . . . .
>
> (Vronfundel 2008)

A plan by this name was indeed worked out by the US Chamber of Commerce in the figures of two economists – Richard Rahn and Ronal Utt – with the help of twenty-nine Bulgarian economists in 1990, and it was the Bulgarian government which requested it. By the name *Plan for the Transition to a Market Economy and Democratic Capitalism* it charted what were framed as 'the necessary' reforms Bulgaria had to implement over the years of the 'transition'. The conspiracy theory, however, also posits that there was a special classified section, which 'few are aware of' and which exposed the 'price of the transition' – an apocalyptic sounding list of the consequences envisaged, including for example, famine, mass poverty, increased diseases, soaring unemployment, the wilful decrease of the population by three million people, and so on. This local 'Rahn-Utt' conspiracy along with the myth of the universal 'Judeo-Masonic' conspiracy have become an important ingredient for the anti-Western (and sometimes also anti-Semitic) character of the narratives of a significant part of the protesters in Winter 2013. In the Manichean scheme of these narratives, both the 'old' power-holders ('the communists') and the 'new elites' ('the neo-liberals'), were traitors paid by foreign (mostly US, and sometimes occult, sometimes secular) secret services. The inherent victimisation discourse of the conspiracy narratives also articulates a position of victimhood

which overlaps (and reinforces) the revolutionary-liberation discourse described previously – Bulgarians as victims of the political class, of US intelligence and of adverse historical circumstances, as well as of foreign-owned energy companies today. What also commonly appeared within these discourses are gnostic eschatological elements – many of the narratives featured popular mystics' prophecies which were drawn upon to legitimate the struggle via invocations of a national eschatology, which usually contained messianic elements. Thus, there appeared to be in the Winter protests a quasi-religious impetus which seemed to manage to mobilise and captivate people in ways that more 'realistic' narratives of designless or contingent explanatory frames did not. We can see this as a form of quasi-religious myth-making harbouring a radical revolutionary impulse. Following Bloch, such quasi-religious elements can be seen as not simply delusions, but also as allusions to the possibilities for the realisation of human desires – as a (Blochian) sense of light held against "the darkness of the lived moment". In this, they seem to emerge as a self-misunderstood revolutionary fervour, which seems to also be accompanied by an underlying opposition to the hijacking and reification of that fervour by formal/organised (and secular) politics (political parties). What all of the above comes to show again is that rational and authentic anti-capitalist sentiments at the core of these narratives frequently got submerged under illiberal and conservative ideologies.

There are two key features of the conspiracy narratives' importance in the protests I'd like to focus on. First, they are again consistently ethnocentric, as the plots are invariably directed against the nation. Thus, they overlap with the revolutionary-liberation agitprop, reinforcing each other. Secondly, unlike most conspiracy theories which paint an overly pessimistic picture of doomed reality which leaves the agents little to no space for action (struggle for change), the conspiracy narratives which permeated a significant part of the national-popular rhetoric of the February protests tended to have optimistic finales: after exposing the horrors of the plots (usually in written texts or videos), calls for resistance were articulated and revolutionary manifestos were offered. For example, in a short video clip uploaded on YouTube, the first six minutes are spent exposing (in writing) the Rahn-Utt plot (accompanied by Schindler's list theme song), followed by two minutes of expository argumentation of how/why it has not and will not succeed – now accompanied by a revolutionary song which suddenly changes the mood and incites for struggle. These conspiracy narratives coupled with revolutionary manifestos structure one of the central discourses of the February 2013 protests – that of 'awakening'. Although, the trope of 'awakening' is one of the most common protest tropes in any popular mobilisations, I would like to focus once again on its relevance to a task of unearthing utopian seeds specifically within ideological articulations (by being appropriated and integrated into particular discourses in the post-socialist context).

The trope of 'awakening' has been around since Bulgaria's liberation struggles from the Ottomans (and, again, has been central to most other popular mobilisations in both CEE and globally). It is no coincidence that it circulated within the Winter protest discourses often as part of nineteenth century revolutionary poetry

(e.g. 'Rise up, rise up Balkan hero, *wake up* from deep sleep'; see previous discussion). Yet, the 'need to awaken and rise up' against the oppressors is not a trope which was suddenly revived from its nineteenth century liberation struggles' tomb straight into the 2013 protests. It is a trope which persisted throughout the post-1989 'transition' and structured much of the civil society discourse of the region during the time (recall my discussion in the previous chapter of the intellectuals' contemptuous discourse of the 'passive masses' whose 'unenlightened' nature was portrayed as 'sleep' to connote inactiveness, lack of civic virtue). It was a narrative consistently utilised by intellectuals: throughout the 'transition', the 'birth' of a civil society was judged by how 'awake' the 'masses' were so that every time large protests occurred, political commentators rushed to declare that 'people have awakened' and hence civil society has 'finally been born'. The commonly accepted conception of conspiracy theories is one of reactionary narratives signalling 'agency panic', or in Melley's (2000: 12) words: "an intense anxiety about an apparent loss of autonomy, the conviction that one's actions are being controlled by someone else or that one has been 'constructed' by powerful, external agents". However, coupled with the trope of 'awakening', which on its part helps tie it in with the revolutionary-liberation discourse, these narratives aid the articulation of a *conscious (and rational) political subjectivity* – one of a 'risen', now 'alert' (as opposed to previously 'inert' or 'asleep') agent capable of generating an impact on their social environment, and hence able to produce social change. In this sense, we can think of the proliferation of conspiracy theories as part of protest agitprop in terms of their function to offer presumably illuminating perspectives which are able to activate powerful emotions and hence generate national-popular will for action (to struggle).

The image of the 'rising hero' which emerges from these discourses greatly resembles the image Bloch uses to suggest the transformed nature of humanity in future society – the *upright gait*. Uprightness in Bloch's work is both a goal and a means to a goal (Geoghegan 1996). What we see in these discourses, is a strategic homology established between 'the bent-low gait' (ibid.: 40) of the subjugated person in nineteenth century Bulgarian society and the impoverished citizen today, unable to fully 'extend' themselves. To achieve the uprightness that would project their human dignity, the person needs to stand erect, abandoning their prone position: "the first real trickle of life-force comes from that principle within us which makes us stand up straight" (Bloch, cited by Geoghegan 1996) manifested in the act of rebellion, or in the words of Bloch:

> The claim to the upright gait was within all rebellions; otherwise there would not be uprisings. The very word uprising means that one makes one's way out of one's horizontal, dejected, or kneeling position into an upright one.
>
> (ibid.: 41)

What the conspirational tilt, coupled with the revolutionary-liberation rhetoric, in the national-popular discourses seemed to ultimately produce then is a new, distinctive and potent language which began in February-March 2013 to articulate a

new, *post-transitional political subjectivity* struggling to achieve an upright gait. A rising subjectivity which experiences the 'transition' of the past twenty years as an imposed eventuation (which brought suffering experienced as comparable to that of the subjugation under Ottoman rule), over which the subject had no control (experienced as an externally imposed plot). By rejecting this transition's legitimacy and by calling for retribution, however, this new subject attempts to redeem their control over decisions for the future. In many ways, this fits Rancière's (2004) conceptualisation of democratic politics as an effort by the oppressed – those who have no part – to be 'counted': in his terms, 'the part of no part' has risen and spoken in the Winter protests of 2013.

There is, further, a third, particularly key aspect of this new articulation which, together with the former two (the conspiracy and revolutionary-liberatory language) began to complete the articulation of this newly 'counted' political subject. I explore this third aspect next.

HYBRID DISCOURSES AND IDENTITIES: DE-MONOPOLISING
LIBERAL LANGUAGE

What many of the revolutionary manifestos which flooded the Bulgarian public sphere in February seemed to share was the demand to replace politicians (or political representatives) with *citizens*. A very conspicuous example is one of the key demands placed by protesters for 'citizen quotas' in all major political institutions. Many of the placards which were raised in the streets also echoed this (e.g. 'It is the citizens', not the parties' protest'). What is more, some of the most commonly reiterated phrases in televised interviews with protesters were '(anti)-corruption', '(anti)-monopolies', 'civil society', 'transparency',· 'responsibility'. As Tsoneva and Medarov (2014) observe, these are of course key liberal notions, yet they spearheaded demands for nationalisation of energy companies and abolition of political mediation (parties). Central liberal concepts then textured an essentially populist (anti-elitist) discourse which dichotomises the social order into 'them' – (politicians/mafia/power-holders) versus 'us' – 'the people', and which articulates a conspicuously liberal – responsible, active, alert (who keeps an eye on politicians) – civic subjectivity. Tsoneva and Medarov (2014: 2) refer to this as an *appropriation* – "liberal signifiers are [no longer] privileged object of elites but disperse and lend themselves to popular appropriations" and thus form *popular chains of equivalence*. Tsoneva and Medarov (2014) argue that such hijacking challenged not liberal empty signifiers per se, but rather their representatives.[18]

This phenomenon can further be seen in terms of discourse hybridisation (Fairclough 1992) – movement of a discourse from one social practice into another entails its re-contextualisation within the latter, i.e. a new articulation of elements into which it is incorporated, a new hybridity, resulting in the restructuring of the 'common sense' (Gramsci) which shapes the identity of the group. Articulating themselves as 'citizens' along with 'the people', and calling for 'activeness' and 'responsibility' every day, protesters mobilised a distinctively liberal form of the notion of 'civil society' as a weapon against the liberal notion of political

representation. The popular political subject which constituted itself in this way, however, at the same time distanced itself from the former carriers of liberal 'civil society' – NGO experts (Tsoneva and Medarov 2014) – forging the divisive line along categories such as authenticity and morality (as we shall see later in this chapter). In this sense, we can think of the Winter protesters' 'borrowing' of liberal language as an important part of the process of constitution of a new (upright) and hybrid political subjectivity – one that previously had no 'voice' in the public sphere (in the words of Krastev 2011 it could change governments, but not policies[19]) and which is now constituting itself as an active political subject by attempting a counter-hegemonic attack on the established transitional (liberal-capitalist) rationality. What is particularly interesting is that it is doing so by emptying the contents of the 'transitional' liberal notions and re-filling them with new content, which contradicts the old meanings (demanding nationalisation and the abolition of representational democracy under banners such as 'anti-monopoly' and 'civil society'). Thus, the appropriation of liberal notions does not entail a simple borrowing of concepts and ideas on behalf of a subaltern group which desires to constitute itself as the 'true' representative of the liberal project of a liberal civil society. Instead, liberal notions are re-contextualised into a different discourse – one of radical inclusion, articulated by a new political subjectivity – a sort of 'people's civil society', which also articulates a different ideologico-utopian project for social change – one that is not liberal, but at the same time is not authoritarian either (since it asks for 'more democracy', not less). What is more, to borrow from Rancière's (2004: xii) insight about nineteenth century working class' writing, we can think of the provided discourses as politically efficacious not because they "reflected or embodied a specific class identity but [because they] disrupted such identities in miming the norms of a culture foreign to its [authors'] origins".

What the hybridisation of national-popular and liberal discourses seems to reveal then is an aporia, an ideological incoherence that is very similar to, again, the phenomenon Bloch referred to as 'non-contemporaneity' or the 'nonsynchronic' nature of thinking, as well as to what Gramsci described as the 'incoherences of common sense' – the fragmentary result of the sedimentation of ideas and beliefs elaborated by various intellectuals, including the organic intellectuals of the 'transition'. Apart from being fragmentary, the common sense, as both Gramsci and Bloch agree, often fails to correspond sensibly to people's own lives and experiences. Thus, the discrepancies displayed by the hybridisation of liberal notions and national-popular discourses described previously, can be thought of in terms of a fragmentary coupling of a consciousness which "unites men in their capacity for practical transformation of the real world" and on the other hand, a consciousness which man "had inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed" (Gramsci 1971: 326). The often uncritically absorbed liberal-capitalist ideologemes of the liberal consensus after 1989 then are now peculiarly being interwoven with contradictory ideologemes (egalitarian but also ethno-nationalist, and anti-austerity but also liberal-capitalist ones) in a new, popular, political subjectivity. But, if for Gramsci, these contradictory states usually preclude action and lead to 'moral and political passivity' (Rehmann 2013) of subaltern groups, resulting in the reproduction

of the social order, here we have a contradictory configuration of ideologemes which actually drives an impetus for struggle for change. The latter is then open to the lens Bloch used on the incoherences (non-synchronicities) of ideologies, particularly of rising ones in revolutionary times of change: accounting for the co-habitation of contradictory elements by way of tracing the 'utopian surplus' in these, since these incoherences work, via an utopian impulse, to instil a will for change (Bloch), rather than working to reproduce the social order (Gramsci).

There is a further discourse which is central to the popular discourse community, and which is often thought of as based on a conspiracy narrative – one which sees NGO activists as paid by hostile Western donors. Later in 2013 (during the Summer protest wave) this narrative gave rise to an antagonistic discourse which aimed to directly attack the hegemonic position of the transition's organic intellectuals. This discourse gave birth to the central label used by many Winter protesters to smear NGO activists – 'Sorosoids' – a pejorative term to refer to NGO experts, presumably paid by George Soros to advocate for neoliberal policies, manipulate ordinary Bulgarians, and 'destroy the authentic [people's] civil society'. This discourse has become constitutive of the popular discourse community, but it only transpired once it clashed with the 'sorosoids' during the Summer protest wave, so I will leave its discussion for the next chapter. For now, I shall only offer a brief example which illustrates a first instance of such an open clash. In the midst of the Winter protests, the Bulgarian president tried to organise a meeting between representatives of the protesters, leaders of NGOs, businesses, and MPs. However, protesters refused to negotiate along with NGOs, declaring that they "won't sit at the same side of the table with those against whom we struggle" (Mediapool 2013), in this way identifying NGOs as part of the 'political class' against which they wage their struggle. In this sense protesters saw NGO activists – the key faces of the transitional (liberal) civil society – as an organic part of the 'enemy', and in this way articulated themselves as 'the authentic civil society'. On their part, many liberal intellectuals and NGO experts subjected the Winter protests to an intense and fierce criticism, marking the beginning of the open clash between them, that was to fully unfold during the Summer protests. I look at some of the main points of the liberal intellectuals' attack of the February protests next.

The liberal intellectuals' attack against the Winter protest

Apart from too nationalist and conspiracy-obsessed, the February protests were seen by some liberal intellectuals and NGO activists (particularly those who can be seen as the organic intellectuals of the hegemonic liberal-capitalist vision for the post-1989 transformation) as 'dangerously populist' and 'backward-looking' (pro-communist). The Winter wave of protests was decried as one that sought 'social privileges' and thus as *populist, nostalgic of communism* and *irrational*. To these intellectuals and NGO activists, it seemed to pose a threat to the modernisation (Europeanisation) and de-communization projects which underpinned the agenda of the 'transition'. Such a 'populist' protest threatened to shake the dominant identity discourse of the transition – one that was linked to a capitalist

narrative of future progress – which many thought of as stable and indisputable.[20] In the following discussion, I take each of the key tropes characteristic of this attack against the Winter protest, and discuss them one by one.

Attack trope I: the February protest is 'communist'

The popular language of these protests was seen by many as 'alarmingly' communist since many of its demands and slogans sounded 'socialist' (that is, concerning 'social' issues, such as pay and bills). In the words of one of the most vocal anti-populist and anti-communist activist, Asen Genov, the protests of February were hijacked by radical left-wing ideologues aiming to 'communize' them: "The top of the protest pyramid is occupied mostly, if not entirely, by extreme-left persons, who exert all their powers to "communize" protesters' demands, which otherwise are [really] calls for legal order, morality and dignity" (Genov 2013, no page).

This newly rising leftist wave, Genov insisted, threatened to engender an even more gruesome and incompetent government which would block the country's democratic transition: "[a] leftist wave, which will bring us an even more gruesome and incompetent government, which will compromise the entire democratic process in Bulgaria and its integration with the community of the developed democracies" (ibid.).

This discourse relies on the commonly held (liberal) assumption that any hint of 'communist' leanings is dangerous. Such an assumption drew on a common understanding of socialism which accuses it of 'having derailed' Bulgaria from its 'normal' development. An important feature of the anti-communist discourse as part of the attack the Winter protests were subjected to, is a narrativisation of the 'transition' as a naïve and mistaken programme which charted a plan for ('necessary') political and economic change but missed the 'fundamental' aspect of *cultural change*. In other words, the demands and language of the Winter protests, their critics argued, can be explained by the transition's failure to change people's thinking (common sense). Their presumption here is that the 'transition' should have engendered new ways of thinking and behaviour that are compatible with (and conducive to) the development of the new liberal democratic and capitalist order; and thence would have ensured that the political and economic changes were more fundamental, deep, real, and so on, as opposed to the fake, façade, spurious changes which were produced in reality, they argued. For example, reflecting on the link between the protests of 2013 and the postcommunist transition, Milena Yakimova, a sociologist and lecturer at Sofia University argued:

> [B]ut the idea of a transition somehow emerged as a conviction that [good] reason will come about without human participation – when we get rid of the regime, public [good] reason will come to reign by itself . . . We didn't carry out an analysis of the past and its traumas. We think in a totalitarian manner, we vote immaturely on elections. We choose who will 'save' us, who will 'fix' us, if possible, without us exerting efforts and responsibility. That's why we are in this predicament. Then we also have systemic neglect [on the part of]

all political parties of education and culture, which resulted in an ever decreasing level of cultivation, literacy and culture ... We need to tread the road from passive victims brought to struggle for physical, spiritual and cultural survival, to people carrying responsibility for their lives.

<div align="right">(Yakimova 2015)</div>

In other words, a key point of criticism is a perceived inadequacy of the sedimentation of the liberal-capitalist doxa in the common sense of the 'masses'. The key 'dictum' in these narratives seems to be that the mere removal of the communist regime could not in itself engender the production of a liberal consciousness, as there exist firmly ingrained cultural and psychological habits and dispositions which block its production (a sort of criticism of the incoherences/non-contemporaneity of common sense, described earlier, but in reverse). The presumption inherent to this anti-communist trope of the attack against the February 'uprising' is that the communist past carried certain (psychological) traumas into the present which are identified as the root causes for the present-day deadlock – 'totalitarian thinking', 'immature voting', and 'lack of self-initiative and self-responsibility'. Resilient cultural-psychological legacies, it is assumed, then imprint present thinking and behaviour, including how we protest; in this view, 'low-quality education, literacy and culture' is why people feel nostalgic for the (communist) past, vote for 'wrong' political parties, and rally behind 'wrong' slogans (e.g. for nationalisation). The lack of a liberal consciousness (or the persistence of a communist consciousness) is, in this view, to blame for the injustices in society today, or as Yakimova continues:

> Liberalism in general generates inequalities, no doubt about that, but [liberalism] is now seen as a fundamental reason for the injustices of our society. This is perverse – we think today that our freedom is the reason for our poverty. But the problem is exactly the opposite – it's not freedom, but its lack and its inadequacy that causes poverty and degradation. And this is where the whole mystery of the transition lies: despite the huge institutional changes, the understanding of freedom has not changed. . . .

<div align="right">(ibid.)</div>

This discourse clearly frames the Winter protests (at which it is targeted) as *not* seeking freedom, grossly distorting their ethical calls for social justice and freedom from want, and turning a blind eye on the 'revolutionary-liberatory' rhetoric. Out of this distortion, a certain grossly disfigured image of the February protester emerges – an image which portrays them as dependent and passive (for seeking 'communist solutions' such as the nationalisation of energy companies), in place of the 'awakened' liberty-fighter subject position that the latter actually attempted to articulate. What is more, the above shows this (anti-communist) discourse as not only attempting such a disarticulation, but also as attempting an explanatory account which links the 'perverse' protest of February with the failure of the transition, but rather than represent the protest as a reaction to a 'failed transition', it

represents it as an illustration (or even as a consequence, as others would have it in further quotes provided) of its failure: effectively arguing that 'the system never underwent fundamental change because the communists stayed in power during the new order, ensuring the continuity of the communist political consciousness'. So now, in addition to the communist elite, it is the abstract 'people', the masses, who get the blame for the 'failure of the transition' – a trope which effectively revives the undemocratic rhetoric of anti-communists in the early 1990s (as discussed in the previous chapter).

Such a narrativisation of the transition as emphasising a failed 'cultural transition' now accommodates a profoundly undemocratic fear of the 'the people' – the 'masses' and their 'wrong' (nostalgic-communist/anti-capitalist) interpretations of past and present. For example, in an interview with Kalin Yanakiev (2014), a public intellectual of conservative right convictions, the interviewer asks:

> How should [we] develop this 'practice of freedom', this 'depth' – because we continue to be politically isolated – we become an *ever-smaller group* of people who cannot openly talk about politics, and in this way a politics of silence gets established.

The 'practice of freedom' and 'depth' (line 1) are presented as characteristic of the *right* interpretations of past and present, and are counterpoised to presumably 'unfree' and 'superficial' (false) consciousness of the nostalgic and anti-capitalist masses who protested in February. The 'threat' – that the anti-communist stance is increasingly isolated and marginalised – looms so large, it is even recognised as a form of censorship imposed on their 'enlightened' reading of both past and present. In this interpretive scheme, those who 'live in the truth' (i.e. those of liberal-capitalist and anti-communist convictions) now need to struggle against the newly imposed mystifications to which larger and larger, and increasingly loud, groups of society seem to 'fall prey' to.

Paradoxically then, self-avowed liberal intellectuals largely failed to recognise the right of different political arguments and distinct proposals for social change to be articulated in the public sphere. The liberal public sphere, which is meant to celebrate and endorse pluralism of political conviction and voice, refused to license the articulation of leftist ('communist') ideas within its realm, ultimately hemming politics in a non-negotiable frame. Little to no liberal 'reasoned' debate over the substantive issues which the Winter protesters and the liberal intellectuals disagreed over even took place. Any proposal that did not sit comfortably within the coordinates of the pro-market logic, was labelled 'communist' (hence backward-looking) and thus delegitimised. This takes us to the other, tightly linked, trope of the liberal attack against the Winter protest – that it is 'irrational'.

Attack trope II: February is 'irrational'

The Winter protest demands were seen as ranging from 'the unwise to the harmful' and 'fantasmagoric', to 'absurd' and 'catastrophic', and so on. Here is a fragment

of these discourses, coming from a written piece in the Bulgarian section of Deutsche Welle:

> The Bulgarian uprising gave birth to a load of absurd ideas. Unfortunately, we have to admit that a large part of the bursting demands over the last few weeks are a result and expression of precisely the lack of adequate civic education. These demands occupy a range from the realistic but too disputable, through to the simply irrational, through to the obviously not doable, up to the catastrophically harmful.
>
> Boyadzhiev (2013)

This specific article then proceeded to list the 'absurd' ideas, citing ideas such as those for complete majoritarian vote, for cutting the number of MPs and for copying the approach Iceland had taken towards its corrupt bank and political elites, as 'irrational', 'futile' and 'fantasmagoric', respectively. Numerous similar articles emerged in various liberal-oriented media which claimed to offer 'rational analyses' of the protest's demands by juxtaposing the latter to 'economic rationality' (e.g. an article in the liberal daily *Dnevnik*, reprinted from a liberal think-tank, titled 'Protests and Economic Knowledge: a Review of Some of the Demands Through the Lens of Economic Theory and Rational Choice' [Stanchev 2013]), or to 'common sense' (e.g. a media piece titled 'The Protesters' 5 Biggest Follies' [Bakalov 2013] in which the author lists the demands for a new constitution, for majoritarian elections, for removing MPs' parliamentary immunity, and cutting the number of MPs from 240 down to 120 as protesters' five biggest follies), or to 'democratic principles (e.g. an article in the liberal *Mediapool*, titled 'The Uprising of the Street is a Test for the Democratic System' [Paunova 2013], where the author sees the protest as threatening democracy despite protesters' strong calls for radical inclusion, demanding 'more' or 'real' democracy').

Among the numerous problematic features of this discourse, I will highlight two key ones. First, more often than not there seemed to be a merely simulated dialogue with protesters' statements, whereby a strategy of labelling protesters' arguments and proposals as illegitimate (absurd, irrational, etc.) served to skirt the need to engage in an actual discussion about what it is that made them 'absurd' or 'irrational' in their eyes. Needless to say, such moves resemble nothing of the 'deliberative' public sphere liberal intellectuals otherwise covet. Such 'undialogized'[21] language (Holquist 1990) effectively aimed to delegitimise and silence the divergent voices of February 2013. Second, this was achieved particularly through a strategy of pinning protesters' arguments to a supposed 'irrationality'. Yet the 'rationality' they pit it against is a far cry from the idealised 'reason' Jurgen Habermas propounded, for example, and is instead more akin, as Stavrakakis (2014) notes, to the instrumental reason which Adorno and Horkheimer (1972) criticised. What is more, on a more fundamental level, the tendency to de-rationalise, and thus belittle, the claims made by the Winter protests on the grounds of their emotionally charged content (where emotion is posited as irrational) is a move which must be challenged in its own right. 'Unemotional reason' is just as fallible as emotional judgements (Sayer 2006),

and as Archer (2000) and Nussbaum (2001) claim, emotions are important evaluative judgements which are "very closely connected to beliefs about what is valuable and what is not" (Nussbaum 1993: 239, cited by Sayer 2006). To dismiss these as merely 'irrational' does nothing but highlight the full-on conflict between belief systems and values that the above actually entails. To the extent that one side of the conflict refuses to acknowledge its own value-based grounding, instead claiming for itself a superior position based on a claim to access to supreme 'rationality', and in this way advancing particularistic interests masked as universal, their discursive practices are ideological distortions which serve to repress and dominate.

Attack trope III: February does not belong to civil society, as it claims to

The argument implied in the quote provided previously that Bulgaria's politico-economic order has changed, but 'the Bulgarian people' have not – that they have not "evolve[d] from subjects into citizens" (line 12 in the text provided) in order to be able to (recognise the need to) stop the 'red malaise', is tightly linked to another point of liberal criticism: that the Winter protest is not a protest of civil society. The link between the two arguments (and discourses) – the anti-communist and the civil society one – is visible in the way democracy and civil society are represented in this discourse. The claim articulated can be summarised as follows: 'democracy in itself is not enough, because the communist consciousness of the subject ensures the reproduction of the communist order, an authentic civil society on the other hand, is bound to do away with the communists'. In the words of one of the most famous liberal intellectuals, Edvin Sugarev,[22]

> [T]he Bulgarian does not know what to do with their freedom. They not only fail to value it – they are even afraid of it. They are afraid to carry responsibility for their actions, they are afraid to determine their future – and they want somebody else to take this responsibility for them. This is the real reason for them to prefer their miserable lives under communism, when everyone was equally low and equally deprived of rights – before the current life in freedom, where there are numerous potential chances – but to achieve something you need to be able, you need to want it, you need to believe in yourself. In other words: Bulgaria changed during the years of the transition – the Bulgarian is the one that did not change. And the big failure of the Bulgarian transition is not in the fact that we stayed the poorest and the most corrupt state in Europe. It is rather in the fact that the Bulgarian didn't succeed in evolving from a subject into a citizen. He didn't acquire a civic consciousness . . . A civil society did not get established – and its lack is the detrimental factor in Bulgaria, because it is exactly [civil society] that is the only possible corrective of political misbehaviour and the dangers of corruption.

Thus, in addition to, and as part of them being 'dangerously leftist and populist', the February protests were also symbolically cast outside of civil society, despite

the latter's claims to be representing it (recall protesters' slogans). February protesters' self-identification as civil society was specifically, and cynically, mocked: it was frequently referred to as 'the so-called civil society'. Here is a fragment illustrating such criticism, again from the Bulgarian section of Deutsche Welle (where Bulgarian liberal journalists write) under the satirical title '*We repeal gravitation! And everything else*' (Boyadzhiev 2013) (in this way mocking the all-or-nothing, full of pathos and rejection, rhetoric of protesters):

> It is not enough for a group of people, no matter how large, to get angry, to rise and start yelling, for [us] to say that civil society has woken up. No matter how loud the calls for 'a better life' and 'more justice' are shouted out, they are not yet civic demands. The most general and total disgust with politics is not yet a civic position.
>
> Civil society must be capable of speaking much more 'articulately'. It learns from its own experience, [it] is aware of, and has a good command of, democratic procedures, [it] knows its rights and responsibilities and is constantly, rather than incidentally, politically active. Civil society is not an amorphous mass which does not know exactly what it wants, how and whether [what it wants] can be achieved and to what consequences. It consists of various groups with different, sometimes diverging interests, around which it structures and organises itself, including in political parties.

The attempt of the Winter protest to de-monopolize the exclusively liberal application of the term 'civil society' then was fiercely attacked by delegitimizing, through exaggeration, sarcasm, ridicule, and often clear distortion, of the demands the 'people's civil society' made during their mobilisation in February–March 2013.

Earlier, I mentioned that a discourse articulating NGO activists as foreign-paid agents working against the interests of 'the people' – 'sorosoids' – is another key discourse characteristic of the national-popular discourse community. But the clash between the two groups claiming to 'be civil society' was only indirect in February (before fully unfolding during the Summer protest, as we shall see in the next chapter). Yet, a relationship of antagonism was clearly burgeoning in both the Winter protesters' language and the liberal intellectuals' 'analyses' of the protests, many of which were also authored by NGO activists. Another article in Deutsche Welle is illustrative. Under the title 'Bulgaria, the People and the NGOs', Vaksberg (2013) reflects on the 'animosity' between civil society organisations and citizens. She uses the example of protesters' refusal to sit on the negotiation table together with NGO representatives (mentioned earlier) as a sign not only that protesters fail to recognise NGOs as truly representing their interests, but also as illustrating the 'fact' that "[a] huge part of Bulgarian citizens do not even know who is supposed to represent their voice", and that "[c]ivic organizations in Bulgaria urgently need citizens. And vice versa – citizens urgently need civic organizations" (ibid.).

This subtle representation of protesters not just as distancing themselves from NGOs, but also as being 'unenlightened' in doing so, is cogently accompanied in the article by a picture showing an older woman holding a placard saying 'Help!

Save us!!!' – in this way reproducing the now common (among liberals) practice of framing protesters as helpless, hapless, agency-less, and ultimately *not* (representing) civil society.

In many ways, then, what emerges in these texts is a set of discursive practices that can be seen in terms of what Rancière (2004) describes as the 'policing' of the social order through 'the distribution of the sensible' – that is, the practices of determining, which imply both inclusion and exclusion, the roles and modes of participation in a common social space (Rancière 2004, 2013). The distribution of the sensible then parses the visible from the invisible, the thinkable from the unthinkable, the sayable from the unsayable, the doable from the undoable. Similarly, in the terms of Agamben (1998), this established pattern of inclusion and exclusion (which nonetheless is historically contingent) works via the Aristotelian distinction between mere biological existence ('zoe') and the political life of speech and action ('bios') – between 'bare life' and the 'good life'. Both Rancière (2004) and Agamben (1998) invoke the Aristotelian characterisation (at the beginning of his 'Politics') of man as a political animal, endowed with speech and contrasted to animals who only have *voice* which is only used to express pain and pleasure, but not *speech (logos)*, which is used to discuss matters of common concern (i.e. political matters). Rancière (2004) builds on this, arguing some people (groups in society) are given the role of only 'hearing' speech, but are excluded from producing speech (and left with only a 'voice'). In this sense, during protests, Rancière argues, people (who are not taken to be the 'right' people to speak; e.g. non-experts) have to consistently 'prove' that they are speaking, and not just 'shouting', that they use speech and not just voice. In this sense, it is via the invocation of the idea of 'civil society' that many liberal intellectuals attempted to delineate (or rather, reaffirm) patterns of inclusion and exclusion, hinged on the recognition of some individuals' and groups' possession of logos – "the articulate language appropriate for manifesting a community in the aesthetics of the just and the unjust, as opposed to the animal phone, appropriate only for expressing the feelings of pleasure and displeasure" (Rancière 2001: par. 23). "If there is someone you do not wish to recognise as a political being", argues Rancière, "you begin by not seeing them as the bearers of politicalness, by not understanding what they say, by not hearing that it is an utterance coming out of their mouths" (ibid.); it is namely by such anti-democratic and anti-political refusal to recognise the capability of Winter protesters to produce not just noise but reasoned discourse, that liberal intellectuals attempted to exclude them from the sphere of 'civil society'.

February protesters' 'wasted lives'

So far, I have offered fragments of these discourses, but I want to complete the examination of the liberal intellectual attack against the Winter protest by taking a closer look at one of the several seminal texts which circulated widely in the public sphere and sedimented the frames I have outlined thus far. An important text, which was widely read and shared and which was among the key texts which framed the February protests in this manner is an interview taken by the largest

online newspaper, Dnevnik (the liberal *Kapital*'s daily), from Georgi Gospodinov – one of the most prominent contemporary Bulgarian writer. As follows, I analyse large fragments of his interview (Todorov 2013), where he essentially offers his thoughts on what he saw in the Winter protests. Using a quote from the interview, the newspaper titled the article 'The question is not who will pay the bills, but who will pay for a wasted life':

It is clear that this is a protest of desperation and of poverty. The society of the desperate is very vulnerable and fragile. And very easily [these] faceless tough boys – this hoodies avant-garde – can distort the situation, [they] can easily radicalize it, which is what [really] happened . . . Till late last night, I was watching the demonstration wander on Sofia's night streets. A long walk in the city's night, without a clear [notion] of where to. This wandering is very telling, and this is what makes me [feel] gloomy. We have the poverty, we have the desperation, but beyond that there is no horizon. [It is] the desperation of the people, whose lives is amiss, who don't know what to do and go out on the street where they wait for somebody to give them meaning.

[Theirs is] a protest against the state permeated by corruption, and at the same time [they] demand nationalization – this is absurd. Apart from having no face, the protest has no language yet. At least for now . . . What we're seeing is one mute body. And in this diluted space it is very easy for populist and extremist voices to nest in.

When 'The Physics of Sorrow'[23] came out a year ago, there was only sorrow, now it has overflowed, it has radicalized. It needs to drain away and to find its exit. There are other ways in which sorrow in a civilized society can be tamed. Are these events, clashes and wandering people with bottles and stones the face of the coveted civil society? Or, on the contrary, are they a consequence precisely of the lack of civil society during these years, [a civil society] which would exert constant pressure on institutions, exert uninterrupted resistance, shout in the ear of power holders, use all instruments. . . .

[T]he big question is not who will pay my electricity bills, but who will pay for my wasted life. This is the invisible and unarticulated question by people outside. They may never voice it, but this question will hang out there. This is the other crisis which is now clearly visible on the streets of Bulgaria today.

Of course, everyone is sensitive to money and the crisis was easily recognised as mostly financial. But behind it are other, equally severe crises. Lengthy economic crises turn into existential [crises]. And when this happens, people go out [on the streets] and say "I don't know what to do with this state, nor with my own life". There is a concoction of personal dissatisfaction boiling here, a deficit of meaning, a lack of a horizon, despair from the state. . . .

When we come out on the street and say "It's your fault we live like this", this is not the truth. An old habit from socialism is to delegate [our lives] to power-holders, they need to look after everything in our lives. The protests show a wholesale alienation from and schizophrenic relationship with the state. We can't blame [the state] for all of our depressions. The big recession

is there economically, but it exists also in our own failed lives, and for these our own resistance is very important. . . .

An important feature of this text is that its author clearly positions himself outside of the protest: watching the 'aimless' demonstration 'wander' in the night (line 5) as an external (disinterested and thus 'objective') observer. This puts him in a position to analyse and criticise, which is effectively what he *does* in his text. A crucial part of his 'analysis' is the nominalization 'a protest of desperation and of poverty' (line 1), which functions as an elision of human agency in these protests: protesters as agents are missing; instead the author sees only despair and poverty as driving the events. Beginning his 'analysis' with an assertion that 'this is a protest of the desperate and the poor' also serves, from the start, to delegitimize the demands it places: the underlying assumption is that a protest of desperation cannot produce 'rational' and 'sensible' demands; instead, it is susceptible to all sorts of irrational and imprudent leanings. Gospodinov also fails to see any (positive) goals, any 'horizon' beyond the idle 'wandering'. To the author, the contradictory nature of protesters' demands – which are against corruption and at the same time for nationalisation (line 10) – have no meaning beyond an attestation to these people's incapacity and helplessness; their protest, to the author, appears both 'radical' and at the same time in a weak, begging position: they "go out on the street where they wait for somebody to give them meaning" (line 9). The established 'lack of a face' and of 'language' (lines 11/12) contribute to delegitimizing the protest by aiding the conclusion that the protest is agency-less, a 'mute body' (line 12). Noting a lack of 'language' is an odd strategy here, however, since, as I showed, most other critical texts in the public sphere often pointed out and mocked the idiosyncratic language of the February protesters (including the revolutionary agitprop and conspiracy narratives I described previously). What Gospodinov probably means by a lack of language then could be the lack of an *agreed on*, coherent, 'rational', 'legitimate' language. In contrast, 'theirs' is a chaotic, 'absurd', irrational, inacceptable language, which easily accommodates 'populist and extremist' (line 13) ideas such as those of 'nationalisation' and 'legal prosecution of the perpetrators of the transition'.

Once Gospodinov has delegitimized the protest, he can then propose the 'right' solution to exit the crisis: the 'sorrow' which has 'overflowed' and radicalised now needs to drain away, 'exit' or siphon off the streets (line 15). Note, it is not the sorrow (the grievances people expressed) that need to be addressed, but rather its 'overflowing' on the streets: "there are other ways in which sorrow in a civilized society can be tamed" (line 16), Gospodinov argues. The antithesis the author establishes in the next two parallelistic questions lends a rhetorical effect on a claim that not only are these protests not a protest of civil society (as much as its protagonists claim it to be), but they are also an expression of its negation (lines 18/21). In making such a claim, Gospodinov effectively re-iterates the liberal intellectuals' disarticulation of the February protests as 'civil society' (and he even rearticulates them as its negation). Gospodinov thus rejects the Winter protesters' appropriation of the concept and hence their positioning as an important political

actor: he rejects their counter-hegemonic offensive, without ever engaging in a 'rational', deliberative (in a Haberamsian sense) discussion of their demands.

What is more, he delegitimizes the protest of the precarious by moving the focus on their precarious position away from its systemic (politico-economic) grounding and onto a personal one: it is primarily their 'wasted life' that took them to the streets, not systemic flaws. Playing down the structuring role of economic conditions and fore-grounding an 'existential crisis' helps frame the protest as expressing not anti-system (including anti-capitalist) sentiments but a 'concoction of personal dissatisfaction'. Systemic problems are thus played down in favour of personal responsibility at the level of the individual. Such privatising of responsibility (and stigmatising 'dependency') is key to the neoliberal rationality that crafts persons as individuals who are free 'authors' of their lives (as choice-making 'customers'), and who should blame no one but themselves when they fail to thrive under neoliberal conditions (Rose 1996). Gospodinov's neoliberal conceptualisation of protesters then serves to not only exclude structural explanations for precarity, but further serves to delegitimise their calls for structural justice: that is, their demands for solutions to systemic problems cannot be legitimate since their problems, in the neoliberal conceptualisation Gospodinov offers, stem not from systemic, but from personal failures.

A further (and tightly linked) inference Gospodinov seems to draw here (which is also more directly visible in other texts) is that the solutions to this 'crisis' are hence not in collective struggle, but in individual struggle – a claim which also lies at the heart of the particular liberal notion of civil society which Gospodinov and other liberal intellectuals subscribe to: civil society is not 'collectively struggling [for the common good] groups in society', but rather individuals cooperating to protect their individual/group interests. This particular divergence between two distinct interpretations of civil society will become more visible during the clash in the Summer protests.

Conclusion

Overall then, the discourse of the national-popular discourse community abounded with *revolutionary-liberation agitprop* and *conspiracy theorising*, which comprised different but significantly overlapping and interconnected discourses. It also attempted to de-monopolise key liberal concepts and ideas, the most important of which was civil *society*, with its notion of the active citizen who keeps authorities accountable. This, however, did not entail a simple borrowing of the notion from liberal discourse, but involved a sort of modification which resulted in the decoupling of civil society from its former carriers (NGOs and transition 'experts') and in its 'opening up to popular claim', or 'appropriation' in Tsoneva and Medarov's (2014) terms. The key discourses the February *civil society of the people* mobilised then included traditionally *communitarian* (as well as some nationalist) discourses of 'liberation', 'awakening', 'united-ness', and 'morale', but also traditionally liberal discourses, such as 'civil society', 'anti-monopoly', 'anti-corruption', and 'transparency'. Thus, the identities that the 'revolutionaries' of February built for themselves through both linguistic and non-linguistic practices were those of *patriots, liberty*

fighters and *alert and wilful citizens*. This combination of conspiracy narratives, revolutionary rhetoric, and citizen-patriot identities produced an often internally contradicting and fragmented, sometimes radically inclusionary (when they demanded direct democracy for 'the people') and sometimes exclusionary (when they showed anti-Roma or anti-Turkish sentiments) articulation of a new political subjectivity which attempted a counter-hegemonic intervention twenty-three years after 'the end of history'. This new political agent constituted in the February mobilisation experienced the post-1989 'transition' as an externally imposed turn of events (as a plot) which deprived them of their sense of agency, and ultimately human dignity. By rejecting this transition's (and its liberal consensus') legitimacy and by calling for retribution, however, this new political subject attempted to redeem its control over decisions for the future: in Blochian terms, it attempted to take control over the steering wheel on the journey 'home' (*Heimat*), where the sense of genuine emancipation and the sense of human dignity could be restored.

The counter-hegemonic intervention of the February protesters, however, did not go unchallenged by the *organic* proponents of the very liberal consensus which was effectively being challenged. Through their almost exclusive access to media, and thus to the public sphere, they were certainly in a better position to impose on the protest whatever frame suited their interests. They thus denounced the Winter protest as one that sought 'social privileges', rather than 'civic rights', framing it as *populist, nostalgic of communism* and *irrational*. To explain and dismiss demands for nationalisation of energy companies and other proposals in February as 'irrational' and 'ludicrous', liberal intellectuals carved an immensely distorted image of the Winter protester as a passive 'subject' who relies on (and demands) handouts from the state, rather than a fully-fledged 'citizen' who 'relies on themselves, rather than the state'. In essence, to these intellectuals and NGO activists, the Winter protest seemed to jeopardize the modernisation (Europeanisation) and de-communization projects which underpinned the agenda of the 'transition' that was at the heart of the post-1989 political consensus.

The socio-symbolic power of the group of intellectuals to define the terms of the distribution of status and prestige, stood out particularly clearly in these unequal power dynamics. Protesters in Winter 2013 did not just have to constantly 'prove' that their voice is not mere 'noise', that they are not simply 'shouting', and that their language is legitimate speech (Rancière 2004). In line with what Zarycki argues about other CEE countries (such as Poland), they operated in a politico-cultural environment dominated by the group of the intellectuals, which exerted pressure on them to frame their demands around values traditionally espoused by the intelligentsia, such as morality, freedom and autonomy. Since the subaltern groups who mobilised in February did not express their demands in the grammar of the intellectuals, but instead articulated what intellectuals derisively called 'economistic claims', their demands were declared by intellectuals 'invalid' and their protest – subjected to denigration and even contempt. They were not only consistently lampooned as 'losers' who deserve their economic disadvantage, but their 'grit' to make political demands was consistently disparaged and their right to participate in political life and particularly in civil society – denied.

Political agency and class

The unequal access to the public sphere[24] (i.e. to be 'heard') and the denigration of political agency that February protesters experienced is a matter of class, despite not being explicitly understood as such by political analysts and indeed by protesters themselves. Yet, the glaring lack of class articulation in February is not surprising at all. As indicated earlier in this book, during the 1990s, key to the transition from the socialist industrial state to liberal capitalism was class decomposition, whereby people ceased to positively identify with a social class; and the 'working class' in particular was no longer deployed as a political identity category by people in everyday struggles against exploitation. As we saw in the previous chapter, the liberal-capitalist social imaginary ('horizon') of the 1990s required such class decomposition in order to present itself in universal (rather than in particularistic) terms (i.e. to present its interests as the interests of all and thus become hegemonic). Its success in doing so is illustrated by the 'mini' revolution of 1997 (discussed in Chapter Four) when thousands of people enthusiastically supported a government which pledged harsh anti-working class policies which were to lead to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people. Its success at acquiring a hegemonic character can also be particularly clearly seen in the fate of the unions in the country and the entire CEE region after 1989 whereby workers felt increasingly reluctant to unionise and to defend their interests as part of a general enthusiasm, and even a sense of 'civic duty' for the 'new' social order which required individualised (rather than collective), and self-reliant (rather than 'dependent on the state') 'citizen-workers'[25] (see, e.g., Ost 2000; Bohle 2006; Crawley 2004). What is more, in order to 'realise' the social relations required by liberal capitalism, it was imperative that 'collective representations' of the structural causes of inequality were masked: class inequalities were de-coupled from class, so that the former can appear a consequence of individual choices. Thus, the liberal-capitalist imaginary of the 1990s dissolved the boundaries and masked the conflict between different social classes and their interests by relating them to the common project of the 'liberal transition' to a free market economy and liberal democracy. Although by the 2000s, political scientists, sociologists and scholars of the postcommunist region were concerned about the ostensible weakness of civil society (Howard 2003), one line of inquiry which was likely to provide at least partial answers to the lack of large-scale protest activity is potentially, and paradoxically, precisely the temporary success of (neo) liberal ideology in harnessing wide support for, and acquiescence to, the decomposition of class and other collective identities, leading to the fragmentation and individualization of social inequality and of struggle against it.

Yet, the 2000s and, in the case of Bulgaria, particularly the events of early 2013 seem to attest to the failure of the liberal-capitalist transitional project to become truly hegemonic. Instead, the latter's apocryphal nature was exposed: to wider and wider sections of the population, it transpired more and more as a form of *passive revolution* in the Gramscian sense – that is, a top-down imposed form of political transformation in which the dominant classes managed to de facto exclude the popular classes from autonomous and organised participation in the

process of change (see Thomas 2013). In this sense, we can talk about the rise of contentious politics in CEE since the latter half of the 2000s, and in Bulgaria in Winter 2013, as an attempt at an 'anti-passive revolution' (Morton 2003, 2007), or the eventual response of the *subaltern classes* – those social groups comprising the working and the unemployed classes which had been displaced, marginalised and excluded from political participation in the processes of social transformation of the preceding two decades. This response can then be seen as a form of 'war of position', launched by subaltern groups in an attempt to challenge the hegemonic project of the 'transition', contesting both its substance and its class carriers. In other words, they challenged the transition's liberal consensus in the form of its economic pillars of liberalisation, privatisation, and deregulation, and its political pillar – representative democracy (Stoyanova 2016); and they further challenged the authority of the civil society that was instituted through the transition's liberal consensus – that is, 'expert' intellectuals and NGO activists, who ultimately served (knowingly or not) the particularistic interests of the neo-bourgeoisie class of post-1989 'transitional' capitalism.

Yet, the tendency of the Winter protest in Bulgaria to integrate discontent with the 'politico-economic class of thieves' into nationalistic rhetoric rather than articulate it in class terms, often served to shift anger away from systemic flaws of the post-1989 capitalist establishment, thus preventing what appears to be an inter-class 'war of position' from fully unfolding as such. The inadequately developed class consciousness during the Winter protest then threatened to sever the potentially progressive (anti-capitalist and anti-elitist) kernel of the protest.

The 'rational' and the 'irrational': the fragmentation of class consciousness

Gramsci's linguistic concepts of *normative grammar* and *spontaneous grammar* can further help us shed more light over this apparent passive revolution of the 1990s and 'war of position' of 2013. To recall, utilising the former two as metaphors for the varying degree of hegemony over people's common sense, Gramsci suggested that if a rising class imposes a normative grammar that does not tally with people's previous language and life experience, it is only likely to lead to a 'passive revolution' – one that fails to engage the 'masses' – and will result in continued pressures from the underlying (older) grammars, moral economies and worldviews that the dominant class failed to engage (Ives 2004). As I already suggested, this is partly how one can view the 'revolution' of 1989: as an elite-engineered transformation which failed to engage the region's popular classes. The newly imposed normative grammar of liberal democracy and free market capitalism, however, began to face serious challenges in Bulgaria from 2001 onwards when a multiplicity of contending 'spontaneous grammars' emerged. In a sort of culmination of such a contention, Bulgaria's protest wave of February articulated itself as a more coherently organised (than previously) political subjectivity drawing on the divergent spontaneous grammars. That is, it launched a 'war of position' against the post-1989 liberal consensus and its normative grammar. Armed with

the conceptual tools of 'normative' and 'spontaneous' grammars (as part of an overall understanding of practical political thought in terms of an incoherent 'common sense'), it now becomes much easier to understand the fragmented and internally-contradictory discourses of February's (as well as the Summer's, see next chapter) odd mixtures of different conceptions which bore both ideological and utopian elements.

The odd, discordant and fragmented mixture of nationalist, socialist, and liberal notions in the language of the Bulgarian Winter protesters can then be explained in terms of the production of a liberal-capitalist 'transitional' normative grammar on top of a variety of spontaneous grammars, which are themselves the historical result of a host of previous normative grammars (such as those of the Bulgarian 'National Revival' period, and the pre- and post- 1944 ideological eras), as well as of people's life experiences. A Gramscian perspective here predicts that these contradictory states preclude action and lead to 'moral and political passivity' of subaltern groups, resulting in the reproduction of social order. The 2013 events seemed to rather point in a different direction – the contradictory configuration of ideologemes seemingly drove an impetus for struggle for *change* instead. Hence why I opened these developments up to a Blochian interpretation: tracing within the incoherences (non-synchronicities) of revolutionary ideologies any 'utopian surplus', since these incoherences work, via an utopian impulse, to instil a will for change (Bloch), rather than working to reproduce the social order (Gramsci). Yet, the revolutionary pathos of the national-popular discourse of February, with its romantic and redemptive components, tended to fix discontent with the 'politico-economic class of thieves' into moral-nationalist terms. Thus, apart from providing the utopian impulse for an 'upright gait', its redemptive language of liberation shifted anger away from systemic failures of the political and economic transitional establishment, and hence threatened to dissolve the potentially progressive counter-hegemonic core of the protest. Understanding the nationalist twist of part of the Winter protest in Blochian and Gramscian terms – as a miscarried counter-hegemonic attempt and a manifestation of the contradicting traces of normative grammars in forming spontaneous ones – rather than simply as "an irrational cry of the uneducated and deluded masses" (as their critics interpreted it) is, I argue following Bloch, a crucial task for the Left to embark on. This is particularly important in light of the post-2014 events which saw much of the Winter 2013 mobilisational energy directed against the Roma community.[26] Just like Bloch urged the Left to take the energy of the Nazi mobilisation seriously and understand it in terms of its utopian anti-capitalist longings hidden in the husk of the Nazi ideology, it is today particularly important to *understand* the nationalist twist of many Winter protesters, unearthing its utopian core, rather than either ignoring it (as many critical analysts seem to do), or attacking it as irrational clamour of the 'uneducated' (as many on the centre left have done).

Overall then, from within what emerged previously as alarmingly opaque and fragmented tendencies in which emancipatory impulses get distorted, there lurks a *radical conception of democracy* as the horizon of social critique, epitomised in the utopian desire to *democratise civil society*. Indeed, such a radical conception

of democracy is what is contained in the articulation of a *'people's civil society'* in February 2013. To many who think of the idea of civil society as an essentially liberal notion, the concept of a 'people's civil society' sounds contradictory. Indeed, many critical theorists have rushed to reject the idea of civil society *in toto*, seeing it as a liberal ideological instrument, whose focus on individuality and competition helps constitute a system of mutual selfishness pretending to enrich the society as a whole (see, e.g., Ehrenberg 1999, cf. Rehmann 1999). Such views have tended to equate (or reduce) the concept of civil society with (to) its bourgeois aspect in the historical development of the West[1], where the figure of the *citoyen* is blended with that of the *bourgeois*, and have then called for the concept's abolition altogether (see Rehmann 1999). It is Gramsci who differentiates the utopian (civil) aspect of the concept from its ideological dimension (bourgeois) and it is thus his work on civil society that we can draw upon to challenge such a reduction. (Gramsci's theoretical concept of civil society maintains its analytical difference from bourgeois society, even if it gets empirically subordinated to it: as a theoretical concept it designates the hegemonic apparatuses and dimensions by which social consent is constructed; whereas empirically, it is likened to an instrument of bourgeois rule [Gramsci 1971; Rehmann 1999].) Gramsci argued that civil society *can* be transformed into a sphere wherein the popular classes have secured a footing, enabling them to restrict the bourgeoisie's claim to this important democratic arena. Following this thread, we can see February protesters' identification with a 'people's civil society' as an attempt to *disarticulate civil society from its bourgeois dimension and rearticulate it in radical popular-democratic terms*. In Bloch's words, they attempted to fetch it *"home"*. In its essence then, although it was oftentimes ideologically veiled in ethnocentric, and hence exclusionary terms, the popular imaginary of a people's civil society articulated in February retained its emancipatory and egalitarian core since it mobilised dominated and oppressed groups seeking to restore power imbalances. In this sense, it retained the potential to articulate an inclusive and egalitarian project if its classed character (class commitment) were to be salvaged from the mystifying husk of ethnic (nationalistic) politics.

Notes

1 The lexicon of the (effectively) capitalist discourse in the 1990s, however, almost never included the terms 'capitalism'/'capitalist', but was consistently labelled as *'free market economy'*. This discourse was also effectively neoliberal, as the discussion in the previous chapter showed, but again the term 'neoliberal' itself had not entered Bulgarian political and economic parlance until late 2000s.
2 I use the concepts of 'nodal point' or 'nodal discourse' here in the same way Fairclough (2012: 463) uses them: as a key terrain over which hegemonic struggle occurs; nodal discourses organise relations between other constituent discourses.
3 'Horizon' here is used as defined by Laclau (1985: 37) – "the moment of equivalent totalisation of a number of partial struggles and confrontations".
4 For example, the Bulgarian 'revolution' of 1997, discussed in the previous chapter, aimed to bring in a government that was to implement harsh neoliberal policies, displacing many who nonetheless either supported, or failed to protest the harsh reforms;

another example is the fate of the unions in Bulgaria and in CEE after 1989 whereby workers felt increasingly reluctant to unionise and to defend their interests as part of a general enthusiasm for the 'new' social order which required individualised (rather than collective) and self-reliant (rather than 'dependent on the state') 'citizen-workers' (see Ost [2000] on weak class consciousness in several postcommunist countries).

5 '*Enemy*', is here used in the way Mouffe (1993: 50, 2000: 15) uses it: as somebody/ something to be destroyed, as opposed to an '*adversary*' whose ideas we combat but whose right to voice we defend (i.e. the adversary is perceived as legitimate, and the enemy – as illegitimate).

6 See the previous chapter for a discussion of the first signs of a society-wide cleavage emerging in Bulgaria specifically between an 'active' and 'responsible' 'civil society' versus a 'passive' and 'dependent' 'uncivil' or mass society (often designated as 'the people' used in a pejorative sense).

7 That is, all other possible meanings excluded by the hegemonic discourse of the 1990s.

8 *Grazhdani za evropejsko razvitie na Bulgaria*, translated as Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria.

9 The coalition was also secured with the vote of the leader of the extreme-right Ataka party.

10 ABV translates as *Alternative for Bulgarian Revival* – it is a 2014 split-off from the Bulgarian Socialist Party.

11 The question of how these groups can be seen in terms of 'dominance' is a complex one. Roughly, we can argue that in Bulgaria and in CEE the dominant classes are divided between a dominant fraction strong in economic and weak in cultural capital (political and economic elite/power-holders – the usual targets of protests), and a dominated fraction strong in cultural and weak in economic capital (intellectuals). As Bourdieu and Eagleton (1994) argued, intellectuals – as part of the dominated fraction of the dominant classes – tend to often perceive themselves as dominated. The dominated (subaltern) classes, on the other hand, are weak in both economic and cultural capital.

12 That is, unravelling their 'order of discourse' (Fairclough 1995). To reiterate, following Fairclough (1992), these orders of discourse at the level of social practice articulate 1) *social identities* and 'subject positions', interpellating social actors in specific ways, 2) *social relationships* between people (e.g. ordering hierarchies), and 3) *systems of knowledge and belief* (representing aspects of the world).

13 Some further, but less concrete, demands along the same lines also included the constitution of a 'party-less' political system, a form of direct, non-mediated democracy.

14 In their view, this specifically implies leaning towards communism and pre-modernity.

15 Translation is mine.

16 The word 'enichar' means 'new soldier'. During Ottoman rule, Christian boys (usually between the age of ten and twelve) were forcibly taken from their parents and enrolled in Janissary training to fill the Ottoman army. In Bulgarian folklore, the practice is remembered as 'blood tax' and is taken to be one of the darkest features of the Ottoman domination in the region.

17 Note that Bloch's invitation to pay heed to the realist potential of the apparently irrational is also in line with the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the critical realist approach to research inquiry in the social sciences.

18 See also Tsoneva (2013a) and (2013b) for an earlier discussion of such an 'appropriation'.

19 Also, recall intellectuals' descriptions of 'passive and inactive masses' noted previously.

20 As I showed in the previous chapter, the affective narrative of liberal democracy and free market was thought of as the mainstay that braces the 'right' course of the transition.

21 The term 'undialogised' draws on Bakhtin's (1986) dialogical theory of language, which sees the 'dialogization' of a discourse as the process of the latter's becoming relativised and de-privileged.

22 From interview with me, taken on 6 June 2014. Edvin Sugarev is a well-known public intellectual (writer).
23 One of Gospodinov's books.
24 The unequal access to the public sphere will be further particularly strongly illustrated in the next chapter, where I analyse the discourses of the Summer protest.
25 See Ost (2000) on weak class consciousness and labour's acceptance of the bad deal in several postcommunist countries, including Bulgaria. In his analysis Ost concludes that "East European workers and unionists eschew class identities. They do not think of themselves as a separate class requiring separate organisations to defend their interests. Rather, they embrace the neoliberal project in the hope that 'the free market' will ultimately serve their interests as well" (Ost 2000: 520).
26 A series of anti-Roma protests (most notably in Gurmen in May) occurred in 2015. The same Facebook groups which were used to mobilise people for the Winter 2013 protests were now used to gather support for the anti-Roma demonstrations.

References

Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. (1972). *Dialectics of Enlightenment*. New York: Herder and Herder.

Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bakalov, I. (2013). The protesters' 5 biggest follies. *E-Vestnik* [Online], 25 February.

Bakhtin, M. (1986). The problem of speech genres. Trans. McGee, V. In Emerson, C. and Holquist, M., eds. *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Austin: University of Texas Press, pp. 60–102.

Bloch, E. (1977). Nonsynchronism and the obligation to its dialectics. Trans. Ritter, M. *New German Critique*, 11, 22–38.

Bloch, E. (1988). *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*. Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT.

Bohle, D. (2006). Neoliberal hegemony, transnational capital and the terms of the EU's eastward expansion. *Capital & Class*, 30(1), 57–86.

Bourdieu, P. and Eagleton, T. (1994). Doxa and common life: An interview. In Zizek, S., ed. *Mapping Ideology*. London: Verso Books, pp. 265–277.

Boyadzhiev, Y. (2013). We Repeal Gravitation and Everything Else! [Otmeniyame Gravitatsiyata i Vsichko Ostanalo]. *Deutsche Welle*, (Bulgarian Section) [Online], 4 March.

Celik, N. (2000). The constitution and dissolution of the Kemalist imaginary. In Howarth, D., Norval, A. and Stravakakis, Y., eds. *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 193–205.

Crawley, S. (2004). Explaining labor weakness in post-communist Europe: Historical legacies and comparative perspectives. *East European Politics and Society*, 18(3), 394–429.

Ehrenberg, J. (1999). *Civil Society: The Critical History of an Idea*. New York and London: NYU Press.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London and New York: Longman.

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research*. London: Routledge.

Fairclough, N. (2012). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. [Online].

Genov, A. (2013). *My contribution to the commentaries to the protests* [Moite 'Peese Stinki' kum Komentarite za Protestite]. blog [Online], 26 February 2013.

Geoghegan, V. (1996). *Ernst Bloch*. London and New York: Routledge.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Trans. Hoare, Q. and Smith, G. N., eds. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Holquist, M. (1990). *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World*. London: Routledge.

Howard, M. (2003). *The Weakness of Civil Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hudson, W. (2013). Bloch and a philosophy of the proterior. In Thompson, P. and Zizek, S., eds. *The Privatization of Hope: Ernst Bloch and the Future of Utopia*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Ives, P. (2004). *Language and Hegemony in Gramsci*. London: Pluto Press.

Kellner, D. (1997). Ernst Bloch, utopia, and ideology critique. In Daniel, J. O. and Moylan, T., eds. *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*. London: Verso Books, pp. 80–95.

Krastev, I. (2011). Democracy and dissatisfaction. *Journal of Globalization Studies*, 2(1), 22–31.

Laclau, E. (1985). New social movements and the plurality of the social. *New Social Movements and the State in Latin America*, 23(3), 121–137.

Laclau, E. (1990). *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*. London and New York: Verso Books.

Mediapool (2013). *Utter Cacophony: Protesters and Syndicates Sabotaged the Consultations at the Presidency [Pulna Kakafoniya: Protestirashti i sindikati sabotiraha konsultatsiite pri prezidenta]* [Online], 1 March.

Melley, T. (2000). *Empire of conspiracy: The Culture of Paranoia in Postwar America*. Cornell University Press.

Morton, A. D. (2003). Structural change and neoliberalism in Mexico: 'Passive revolution' in the global political economy. *Third World Quarterly*, 24(4), 631–653.

Morton, A. D. (2007). Unravelling Gramsci: Hegemony and Passive Revolution in the Global Political Economy. London: Pluto.

Mouffe, C. (1993). Liberal socialism and pluralism: Which citizenship. In Squires, J., ed. *Principled Positions: Postmodernism and the Rediscovery of Value*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 69–84.

Mouffe, C. (2000). Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism? *Social research*, 745–758.

Nikolova, M., Tsoneva, J. and Medarov, G. (2014). Politics without politics. Us and them in the protests and the crisis of representation [Politika bez politika. Nie i te v protestite i krizata na predstavitelstvoto]. *Fondatsia Mediina Demokratsia* [Online].

Nussbaum, M. C. (1993). Charles Taylor: explanation and practical reason. In Sen, A. and Nussbaum, M. C., eds. *The Quality of Life*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, pp. 232–241

Nussbaum, M. C. (2001). *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ost, D. (2000). Illusory corporatism in Eastern Europe: Neoliberal tripartism and post-communist class identities. *Politics and Society*, 28(4), 503–530.

Paunova, P. (2013). *The Uprising of the Street Is a Test for the Democratic System [Buntut na Ulitsata e Test za Demokratichnata Sistema]*. Mediapool [Online], 24 February.

Rabinbach, A. (1977). Unclaimed heritage: Ernst Bloch's herritage of our times and the theory of fascism. *New German Critique*, 11, 5–21.

Rancière, J. (2001). Ten theses on politics. *Theory & Event* [Online], 5(3).

Rancière, J. (2004). *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Trans. Rockhill, G. London: Continuum.

Rancière, J. (2013). The People Are Not a Brutal and Ignorant Mass. Trans. Lemmey, H. *Verso* [Online], 30 January.

Rehmann, J. (1999). 'Abolition' of civil society? Remarks on a widespread misunderstanding in the interpretation of civil society'. *Socialism and Democracy*, 13(2), 1–18.

Rehmann, J. (2013). *Theories of Ideology: The powers of Alienation and Subjection*. Historical Materialism. Number 54. Leiden: Brill.

Rose, N. (1996). Governing "advanced" liberal democracies. In: Sharma, A. and Gupta, A. eds. The Anthropology of the state: A reader. Malden, MA, and Oxford: Blackwell, pp.144–162.

Sayer, A. (2006). Language and significance – or the importance of import: implications for critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 5(3), 449–471.

Stanchev, K. (2013). *Protests and Economic Knowledge: A Review of Some of the Demands through the Lens of Economic Theory and Rational Choice [Protesti i ikonomichesko znanie: pregled na niyakoi iskaniya prez pogleda na ikonomicheskata teoriya i ratsionalniya izbor]*. Institut za Pazarna Ikonomika [Online].

Stavrakakis, Y. (2014). The return of 'the people': Populism and anti-populism in the shadow of the European crisis. *Constellations*, 21(4), 505–517.

Stoyanova, V. (2016). Civil society and party politics in Bulgaria after 2013: a Gramscian look. *Political Studies Review*. 'Online First' Published 1st December 2016. [Available from: DOI:10.1177/1478929916667367].

Thomas, P. (2013). Hegemony, passive revolution and the modern Prince. *Thesis Eleven*, 117(1), 20–39.

Todorov, S. (2013). Georgi Gospodinov: The question is not who will pay for the bills, but who will pay for the wasted life [Georgi Gospodinov: Vuprosut ne e koj shte plati smetkite, a koj shte plati za provaleniya zhivot]. *Dnevnik* [Online], 23 February.

Torfing, J. (1999). *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe and Zizek*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Tsoneva, J. (2013a). Real power directly to the people. *LeftEast* [Online], 7 March.

Tsoneva, J. (2013b). Bulgarians in flames: on the current wave of self-immolation. *LeftEast* [Online], 27 March.

Tsoneva, J. and Medarov, G. (2014). *The Rise of the Rhizomatic Party Form* [Online].

Vaksberg, T. (2013). Bulgaria, the people and the NGOs [Bulgariya, Horata, i NPO-tata]. *Deutsche Welle* [Online], 4 March 2013.

Vrofundel (2008). How the US Ruined Bulgaria [Kak SASHT razrushi Bulgaria]. [YouTube video].

Yakimova, M. (2015). Memory is a collective force, dramaturgy [Pametta e Kolektivna Sila, Dramaturgiya]. *Banitza* [Online], 23 February.

Yanakiev, K. (2014). A conversation with Kalin Yanakiev [Razgovor s Kalin Yanakiev]. *Banitza* [Online], 12 October 2014.

6   In defence of the liberal consensus

Civil society of the middle class

Before the dust of the Winter protests in Bulgaria had settled down, and less than a month into its mandate, in June 2013, the new government – a coalition between the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) – made a controversial decision to appoint Delyan Peevski, a media mogul widely suspected of large-scale corruption, for Head of the National Security State Agency (abbreviated DANS). The appointment was widely seen as a brazen demonstration of the mafia's grip on politicians and triggered yet another wave of mass protests. Outraged at the news, people organised very quickly online, and flooded the square in front of the Ministry Council carrying placards such as '*Who Appointed Peevski?*', '*Resignation*', '*Mafia*'. Their central demand – for the repeal of Peevski's appointment – was met only days after the start of the demonstrations, but the protests continued, now demanding that the government resign too, since it no longer merited citizens' trust. The demand for resignation was further accompanied by calls for '*European normality*', '*authentic experts*', '*transparency and morality in politics*'. With varying intensity, these protests lasted for the remarkable thirteen months, ending with the resignation of the government on 23rd July 2014.

This protest appeared to attempt to articulate a liberal-oriented political position. Its prevalent pro-Western (and pro-EU) rhetoric, however, coexisted with frequent conspicuously illiberal language directed at the MRF, which is unofficially known as the party of the Turkish minority. It also abounded with scathingly anti-communist rhetoric, directed at the Bulgarian Socialist Party, continuing the anti-communist line taken by the critics of the February protests. Characteristic of this protest also seemed to be a surge in creativity: people organised various 'performances', making use of the power of satire to express their grievances and attract attention; another key feature was protesters' purposeful avoidance of disruptive behaviour and confrontation with police, repeatedly insisting that the protest stayed peaceful (and 'positive'). Even the hash-tag given to the protest on social networking sites – DANSwithme[1] – spoke of its 'positive' character. Based on these characteristics (creativity, peacefulness, pro-Western leanings), some of the liberal intellectuals and media attempted to frame it as the protest of the *moral, productive* (and creative), *tax- and bills-paying*, and even *beautiful* middle class, which has finally 'risen' to do away with the communist remainders and finish the 'incomplete transition' to European 'normality'. The frame was quickly picked up by many

of the protesters themselves who rejoiced in making a 'beautiful revolution' that was to bring the long-awaited 'European normality'. Much of the identity-building efforts of this protest appeared to be based on a struggle to establish difference, asserting that the participants in this protest were different from the depraved political elites, but further claiming that they were also different from what were increasingly consistently referred to as the 'poor and the desperate' of the Winter protests. Another key object of differentiation appeared in the figure of what were dubbed 'counter-protests'. In parallel and in response to the ongoing daily protests, supporters of the governing coalition from across the country participated in daily *pro*-governmental protests. Several such 'counter-protests' took place since the start of the *DANSwithme* marches with the largest ones held in July, in September and finally in November 2013. The thousands of BSP and MRF supporters who often arrived by bus and train from across the country into Sofia were subjected to intense ridicule, and their protest's legitimacy was consistently denied. Thus, it was largely in contradistinction from these counter-protests and from the February protests that some liberal intellectuals and activists attempted to build a superior and self-righteous identity for *DANSwithme*. Via liberal media they cynically opposed it to both the Winter protest and the counter-protest. In this way, a very explicit frame was quickly imposed and became dominant, and it essentially posited that it was the poor and desperate who protested in February and who were either bribed or forced to go to the Summer counter-protests, while *DANSwithme*, they argued, was the 'spontaneous' march of the 'middle classes' not begging for material 'privileges' (such as lower bills) as (pre-modern) 'subjects' would do, but demanding 'values' as (modern, European) 'citizens' would do.

This chapter applies a Critical Discourse Analysis to the texts which formed the Summer protest discursive event, aiming to offer a normative and explanatory critique of the discursive dynamic outlined previously. Similarly to the approach taken in the previous chapter, in the first part of this one, I discuss fragments from (or whole) texts which textured the Summer protest, followed by an examination of the discourses of the latter's critics. My analysis of the texts once again involves looking at the Summer protest's order of discourse in terms of its genres (actions), discourses (representations), and styles (identities), as realised in the various features of the texts (their semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic aspects). I particularly aim to investigate how these texts and discourses relate to other texts and discourses within and beyond the Summer protest event, in an attempt to link the concrete social event (the protest) to the wider socio-political context. In the third part of the chapter, I offer a discussion of the key discursive and extra-discursive features of the Summer (DANSwithme) protest, specifically in light of how these relate to the Winter protest whose discourses were analysed in the previous chapter. In essence, my argument holds that after rejecting and attacking the counter-hegemonic attempt by subaltern groups in the Winter national-popular mobilisation, the organic intellectuals of the liberal transition launched a full-blown counter-offensive during the summer of 2013 by way of attempting to frame it as a 'morally superior' protest. This conceptualisation builds on earlier work by Tsoneva and Medarov (2014) and Tsoneva, Stoyanova, and Medarov (2015) who offer a similar conceptualisation of the relationship

between the two protests as being of articulatory struggles for power vis-a-vis civil society. The intellectuals' claim was grounded in a strategic move to articulate the protests' discourses to the class position of an imagined Bulgarian 'middle class' in whose image was concentrated the intellectualist utopias of modernisation and Europeanisation (Westernisation). In the first and second parts of the analysis I study the particular discursive practices of inclusion and exclusion (focusing on their linguistic aspects), through which such articulation was achieved; in the final part, I offer an analysis of these practices by way of seeing them as classificatory and de-classificatory struggles to reconfigure the power balance between classes whose projects (imaginaries) for post-socialist social change clashed twenty-three years after 1989.

The 'middle class civil society's' order of discourse: genres, discourses, styles

Even a cursory look at the languages of the two protest waves shows that they generated a different amount and a different type of texts. The Summer anti-government protest was a lot more discursively complete (offering complete texts, often in the form of 'analyses'); it was also more homogenous and self-reflexive in comparison to the Winter protests. If the discourses in February were mostly incomplete and fragmented – there was a (truly democratic) multiplicity, even a cacophony, of voices horse-racing in the online public sphere in short fragments – then the Summer protests provided more complete, as well as more uniform and homogenous, written and spoken texts. To a significant extent, this was certainly due to the unequal access the two protest groups had to formal mass communication outlets. Winter protesters were previously unknown figures in the public space and had to compete for access to the public arena; they had to struggle for their speech to be heard on the ear- and eye-splitting talk on communication platforms of social networking sites such as Facebook, or in the crowds of the street demonstrations. In fact, the anonymous nature of the Winter protests was consistently taken advantage of by many media outlets, which consistently cherry-picked whose voice would be published/broadcast in light of the media's agenda. The speakers of the Summer protests, mostly well-known intellectuals (including journalists) and NGO activists – on the other hand – had a long-established footing in the public sphere and had access to significant print, TV, radio and online media. Thus, as early as by the end of the first couple of weeks of the protest, a somewhat restricted group of protesters, many of whom NGO activists and liberal intellectuals, had succeeded in using the power of both the written and spoken word to 'contain' the protest (in their words, to protect it from 'irrational' and 'radical elements' [Genov 2013a]) and channel its interpretation in a specific political direction – one that self-professed as liberal, pro-Western, pro-EU, pro-capitalist, anti-Eastern (Russophobic), anti-communist, as well as 'rational', 'enlightened' and 'beautiful'. In the following discussion, I explore how and to what effect this frame was achieved by examining the protests' key genres, discourses and styles (again following Norman Fairclough's approach). We can distinguish two key 'genres' in the Summer protest: 'drama' and 'self-reflection', whose close inspection will show that they set up relationships of moral and intellectual superiority between

DANSwithme protesters and the 'pseudo-political elite', but also in relation to counter-February protesters. The styles, or identities, protesters articulated in this process can be summarised as 'the (risen) real civil society', 'the normal (European) citizens', 'bearers of progress and sanity' and '(r)evolutionaries'. Key discourses included those of 'morality', 'normality' and 'civil society'. It is in the analysis of these discursive differentiation strategies that I look to find the ideological and utopian elements of the clashes which underpin post-transitional Bulgaria's social/class divisions, and which also appear to permeate – albeit to varying degrees and in varying configurations – the rest of the post-socialist societies as well.

Dramaturgy and the symbolic negotiation of power

As mentioned earlier, there was a surge of creativity during these protests. People organised theatrical performances, such as various impersonations (mainly of political figures), themed dances, mock burials, and they produced an incredible amount of original and creative placards, slogans, collages and caricatures. Most of these used the power of satire to expose and criticise the corrupt and 'immoral' character of political elites. Presenting the deficiencies of the political environment as absurd, sometimes hilarious, satire and mockery were used as an entertaining and, in their words, 'positive' way to reach wide audiences and attract attention. In contrast to the Winter protest's 'agitprop' which was serious, highly emotional, full of anger, full of pathos, the Summer protest conversely expressed anger in a 'positive', humorous manner, using ridicule, mock, irony and sarcasm, which ultimately served to project a sense of control and self-righteousness. Thus, rather than using agitprop that triggers emotional and highly charged reactions to provoke and encourage people to protest (as in February), the Summer protests used what they saw as 'more refined' rhetorical strategies to encourage fellow protesters, in an attempt to raise morale amongst themselves, stripping the 'enemy' of any prestige and legitimacy, as well as removing the latter's image of invincibility. The gist of this strategy was that through laughter and symbolic degradation of political authorities, the 'enemy' was transformed into a grotesque which could be laughed at and eventually overcome. For example, a father had dressed his son as Darth Vader carrying a small placard 'Citizens strike back'; another man regularly appeared on the marches with his dog carrying a collar with a placard 'Bastards, you ruined my walk'; another large-size placard read 'You're not intelligent enough to govern us'; a token 'Berlin Wall' was erected only to be symbolically demolished; dance students formed the word 'Resignation' with their bodies; and a piano was placed in front of the parliament with a label reading *'otsvirvame vi'* (literally translating as 'we're whistling you out [with music]', to be understood as a pejorative term for 'kicking out'), and so on. The 'white piano' in front of the parliament building became symbolic of not just the 'peaceful' character of the protest, but of protesters' 'intellectual and spiritual power'. Overall, and as the discourses reviewed as follows will further show, the 'spectacle-like' style of this protest, with its creativeness and peacefulness and its emphasis on 'morality' and 'freedom' were specifically intended to stand for the 'intellectual and moral' superiority of protesters over the

corrupt (and progress-crippling) political elites they challenged. At the same time, this 'peaceful and creative' protest 'of higher goals' was also intended to stand for protesters' superiority over what were seen as the 'unfree' counter-protest organised by BSP and MRF, over the 'uncreative' and 'material' 'people's uprising' of the Winter, and over the 'helpless' non-protesting 'silent majority' (I shall discuss these imagined 'Others' of *DANSwithme* later).

DANSwithme and self-reflection: the protest analyses itself

Another key set of discourse practices protesters engaged in was *self-reflection*. This is evident in the vast amount of texts which were intended as 'analyses' of the protest, and which were often written or spoken by political commentators, journalists, intellectuals, activists, bloggers, almost all of whom were simultaneously active protesters. They produced an extraordinary amount of self-congratulatory texts, asserting their fellow protesters' 'authenticity', 'cultivation', (European) 'normality', (civic) 'morale', and even mental and physical 'beauty'. Many, for example, described the protest as "a certain segment of the population that has never gathered together" – the 'calm, independently-thinking, free-speaking' 'Bulgarian Europeans' (Toni Nikolov,[2] public intellectual), whose 'manners' and 'style' were consistently highlighted. According to many commentators, such as for example NGO-activist and popular protester, Asen Genov (2013b), '*normal people*' had taken to the streets, who also, in the words of prominent public intellectual Toni Nikolov, "had for the first time received the opportunity to gather together and live through the moment of recognising themselves in one another".[3] Others, such as the poet Ivan Teofilov, asserted that "not the Bulgarian people, but the Bulgarian life has gone out and protests" (Teofilov 2013: 7). Numerous photo galleries appeared with pretty faces from the protest; a famous anthropologist, Vasil Garnizov, took on the role of photographing the demonstrations and pictures of good-looking (well-dressed) people flooded offline and online news outlets, and social networking sites (e.g. Dnevnik 2013). The protesting multitude was praised for its ability to withstand 'provocateurs' (presumably paid thugs who would try to turn the protest into a violent one), and for their 'physical and moral hygiene' (Petkanov 2013): numerous pictures of the lack of rubbish on the streets (where the crowd gathered) appeared online, praising protesters' 'good breeding'. As popular activist, Samuil Petkanov, summarised:

> We have all the patience in the world and twice as much brains. We proved that we aren't 'lumpen', that we are better diplomats, that we are better cultured, and more creative. Whoever wants hasty change, [should] go back to 1990 or 1997 and fall asleep again, expecting Godot. We are the generation that doesn't sleep. Kisses.
>
> (ibid.)

It will be the aim of the discursive analysis in the following pages to expose and problematise the provided representations built in these 'self-reflexive' texts as

violently exclusionary and serving (intentionally or inadvertently) an inherently undemocratic political agenda. But before examining these concrete representations (discourses) and the identities (styles) they constructed and construed, I wish to emphasise that a great many of these were textured as part of such a genre of 'self-analyses'. This is important because it highlights the position of the texts' 'authors' and 'principals' (in the sense Goffman [1981] gave to this differentiation: the first as the person/group whose position is put in the text, and the second as the person/group who composes the wording itself). Famous public intellectuals,[4] whose 'function' by definition is to comment on, interpret, and shape public opinion of social events and phenomena, took on the role of external 'observers' during the Winter mobilisations (recall, for example, Gospodinov's text in the previous chapter), thus attempting to position themselves as 'detached' onlookers situated on an 'objective' (and as we saw, 'moral') high ground vis-à-vis the protesting 'masses'. During the Summer mobilisations, these (same) public intellectuals (as well as well-known ['expert'] civil society activists) continued to produce 'analytical' texts; only now their position as authors and principals of these analyses was internal to the protest – they often identified with the very people whose discourses they analysed (as evidenced not only by their explicit support for the language and actions of the people on the street demonstrations, but also by their frequent pronominalisation of Summer protesters as 'we' and 'us'). In this sense, the commonly utilised 'genre' of self-reflexive analyses of the protests highlights their authors' position as internal to the former, building in this way an 'organic' relationship between the two. This is partly how, in practice and through language, some intellectuals explicitly occupied an 'organic intellectual' position (in Gramsci's [1971] sense) in relation to the Summer protest, with significant implications for the character of the class conflict which transpired in the collective mobilisations. *Why* Bulgarian intellectuals formed an organic relationship with the Summer protest (essentially taking their side) rather than with the Winter one will be discussed later in the chapter. For now, let us explore *how* such 'side-taking' occurred through discourse, and how this (re)configured the mobilisation itself.

*Who's in, who's out: discourses of violent exclusion
in the Summer protest*

With the previously introduced snippets of discourses I began to illustrate what from very early on in the Summer protest emerged as consistent patterns of putting particular discourses to work as explicitly exclusionary operators. For example, the discursive repertoire of 'normality' talk referred to previously, permeated a large number of texts wherein the adjective 'normal' was widely and consistently utilised to characterise Summer protesters. From Foucault's (1971, 1980) work, we know that the discourse of 'normality' can function as a particularly powerful tool to exclude people who do not fit within the bounds of whatever the norm of the day is. However, generally 'normality' tends to be indexed to majorities, and 'deviance' – to minorities. Yet, as some of the texts analysed later will show, many Summer intellectual-protesters saw themselves as the *minority* of 'normal' people

(oppressed by the 'unenlightened' majority), in this way abnormalising the majority instead. This discourse of 'normality' then is invoked in their texts in relation to a specific set of norms not as accepted by society at large, but as constricted to an 'enlightened' minority. Such inversion of the mechanisms via which normality conceptions are brought into play are key to the classificatory (and de-classificatory) struggles of protest, so to understand them I next look into their contents, asking, what are the specific set of 'norms' the Summer protest (or rather its organic intellectuals) invoked in order to demarcate lines of inclusion and exclusion.

THE 'BEAUTIFUL' (SUMMER) PROTESTER

Five months after he wrote of the 'wasted lives' of the 'desperate and poor' February protesters, and three days after the start of the Summer protests, Georgi Gospodinov offered his account of the June mobilisation in another interview he gave for the same liberal newspaper (*Dnevnik*). The title this time read 'The protesting human is beautiful' (Gospodinov 2013):

> Some time ago I wrote that the reading human is beautiful. Because [they] do invisible work on taste, and it is harder for the human [who has] taste to become a scoundrel. It is for this reason that the protesting human is beautiful too. They are connected in a peculiar way. The reading protester stands out and makes the protest brighter and meaningful. Literally and metaphorically this is the

Protest of the children

> The children and grand-children of those who took to the streets in February about their bills. But June is not February. The children of June want a lot more. And the question is not about money or bills. The political elites were quick to react in February. When [the question] is about money, they know how to react. A few promises, a little bit of state reserve [money] and the enemy [is pointed out as] the foreign energy-distribution companies. . . .
>
> Now [the question] is of something different. And the confusion is thorough. We don't want the 'backstage' to govern us, protesters say. And the elites do not understand, because the 'backstage' is for them a culture medium, they know nothing different. And they can't understand what exactly it is protesters want. To them,

Professional politics is only that – backstage

> This time the old politologists and their servile explanations, are missing – the ones who in February, directly from the TV, used to put words in the mouths of the consumerist protesters who [protested] about electricity and prices. The people who could not pay their electricity, the poor and the abject, had to repeat abracadabra-s such as 'Icelandic model' or 'Irish model',[5] nationalisation, etc. These [protesters] who are now on the street every evening from

18:30 have a job. They pay their electricity and gas bills. They are all sorts – parents, teachers, journalists, writers, cyclists, actors, engineers, students, readers . . . They are not professional revolutionaries or part of the *agitka*.[6] To have them out on the street, you must have bitterly offended them.

[T]he financial crisis . . . is only the tip of the iceberg of a much deeper invisible crisis, [that is] much more personal

A crisis of meaning, a deficit of future

The numbers don't solve all problems. . . . What we're observing is the failure of the experts, not only here [in Bulgaria] by the way. Yes, it is good to have experts, but expertise is always after morale. Economics is after ethics. Because an expert without morals is only a useful instrument in the hands of whoever buys him, [in the hands] of any oligarchy.

What is dangerous [for the protest], what should we be watching out for? [The protest shouldn't] lean, [and be] provocatively pushed towards nationalistic slogans of the 'You're Turkish' type. This is below this protest's level . . . Also, the midnight clashes on the streets are unnecessary. This is the hour of another [type] of agitki. The protest is larger than the HQ of 'Ataka'.[7] [It is] larger and stronger than the agitki, which will join in. It needs to develop, whilst on the go, an immunity towards such type of foreign bodies and to eject them on the spot.

I hope this protest will have the strength to preserve itself the way it started – with the parents who carry their children on their shoulders, with the calm anger, with the smiles; with the anticipation of a community at last.
Because the protesting human is indeed beautiful. And meaningful.[8]

This time around, Gospodinov sees the protester very differently from the way he saw them in February: they are now 'beautiful' in their act of standing up to shadow politics (or 'backstage' politics [lines 15 and 17]). The trope of the 'beautiful' (Summer) protester was quickly picked up by the vast majority of the protest's discursive community. Although a handful of people took it in the literal sense (and pointed to photos of well-dressed and pretty-looking protesters as evidence!), it is safe to assume (based on the rest of his text) that Gospodinov intended the use of the adjective 'beautiful' not in a physical, but in a psychic and moral sense. If we were to detach the claim that the protester is 'beautiful' away from the remainder of Gospodinov's text, we would be inclined to even note some resemblance between the trope of protesters' 'beauty' and the motif of the Blochian 'upright gait' discussed earlier, in the analysis of the Winter protest. Indeed, 'beautiful' could have been uttered by Bloch in reference to the act of people who have 'risen' and rebelled against their oppressors; beauty would in his work symbolise the intrinsic worth in the *act of protest* as a deeply admirable human act of standing up against injustice and oppression. The use of the trope of 'beauty' could thus be taken to etch out a utopian image of a dignified human being who attempts to do away with their prone, subaltern position. It is not too difficult to imagine Bloch

describing the act of the Winter protester of 2013 as 'beautiful': the poor and the desperate human who despite all odds stands up tall and assumes the 'upright gait' performs an undoubtedly 'beautiful' act. However, on reading the rest of Gospodinov's text – both this one and the one he wrote back in February – we are forced to dismiss any resemblance between his and Bloch's intended meanings as mere wishful thinking. For, Gospodinov makes it very clear that not every protesting human is beautiful by definition. He failed to discern any 'beauty' in the protesting human in February, for their poverty and desperation made them, in his eyes, 'impotent' and worthy of pity, not of admiration.

Although the (utopian) dream of the erect posture of the proud human being clearly emerges in Gospodinov's (and other intellectuals') text, the beautiful protester he discerns in the Summer, unlike their fellow Winter protester, has no prior experience of the latter's misfortune – the protester of June 2013 was originally 'not a lumpen', they were 'smart' and 'well-read', 'better cultured' and 'enlightened'; all they needed to do was to stand up to shadow and corrupt politics and thus become the *active*, rather than just the *better citizen*. The biography of the protester seems to determine the legitimacy of their act. In short, by celebrating only the 'reading' (cultured), and by extension – the advantaged – protester as 'beautiful'/'meaningful' and thus as *worthy*, Gospodinov effectively deprives all others of *legitimate* political agency (along with rationality).[9] Indeed, in the juxtaposition he makes between the February and the Summer protesters a couple of paragraphs further down in his text, we find out what it is that, to him, makes the latter 'beautiful' and worthier of appreciation: they have jobs (aren't idle), they aren't poor (can afford to pay their bills), and they occupy a respectable position in society (they are parents, teachers, writers, readers, etc.) (lines 23/24 of text provided previously). In this frame, then, a biography of self-sufficiency grants one the authority to protest. The Winter protest, in contrast, was interpreted as being about trivial materialities wanted by the ('consumerist' [line 20]) poor and desperate, who, being poor and desperate, could not have possibly articulated a rational and worthy of attention (or appreciation) set of demands. The corollary here then is that a biography of poverty does not merely constrict one's life chances, but bars one from equal and valid political existence. Needless to say, all of this runs counter to any of the democratic principles Bulgarian intellectuals claimed to endorse immediately after 1989, and which were central to their rejection of the legitimacy of the pre-1989 political order, as well as to their championing of the post-1989 'transitional' liberal democratic project.

Going back to Gospodinov's text, he further cites precisely what among February's demands he saw as unacceptable 'abracadabra-s' (line 21) back in February – protesters' call to emulate Icelandic and Irish models of dealing with corruption, and nationalisation of energy companies, and so on. It is particularly puzzling why a self-avowed liberal intellectual such as Gospodinov (among many others) would so adamantly categorise these as arguments so unacceptable that they fail to merit access to the deliberative forms of discussion a liberal intellectual would otherwise claim to endorse. What is more, the reader will remember that Gospodinov argued in his text on the Winter mobilisation that February protesters' anger had to 'drain

away' and siphon off,[10] whereas this one now has to be heard. In this way, he and the many other intellectuals and activists who picked the same line of framing the 'worth' of protesters, effectively forced upon a wide range of groups who failed to fit into their prescribed elitist model for 'a worthy citizen-protester' a very specific form of symbolic violence – one that denies an equal public existence and thence political agency. These discourses then begin to expose a significant shift in the ideological articulations of Bulgarian intellectuals, whereby what occurs is an apparent disarticulation away from a 'democrat' self-identity (which formed the mainstay of their political identity in the 1990s) – a shift which, considering their persistent symbolic power, would undoubtedly have significant consequences for the configuration of class power dynamics in Bulgarian society.

RIGHTS OR PRIVILEGES: IDEOLOGICAL DISTORTIONS

We could have easily dismissed Gospodinov's elitist search for meaning and beauty and attributed it to an imagined elevated and lofty position of 'a man of art'. However, his text celebrating the 'beautiful' Summer protester turned into one of the most widely read, shared, re-published, discussed, and disputed texts of the Summer protests. The description of the *DANSwithme* protest as 'beautiful' and 'meaningful' in opposition to the (supposedly 'ugly' and 'meaningless') Winter protest was taken up by many protesters, intellectuals, and media, giving rise to a string of related binarisms. A central such binary was chiselled between demands for *rights* as opposed to demands for *privileges*, as vividly described by Asen Genov (2013c), one of the most popular activist-protesters:

> February was the poor's protest, whereas now it is the protest of people who have promising futures, who lead independent lives. The February protest was for privileges, now it is for rights. Back then they wanted lower electricity prices, or in general terms – they wanted privileges, whereas now they want fundamental values, they want the recovery of democratic principles, [they] want the state to enter the course of normal democratic development and to exit the course of the mafia-governed political class . . . In the winter, [people] protested wanting some sort of privileges for the state to give to people, whereas now [it] is the opposite – people [want] to retrieve what the mafia, by seizing the state, has taken from them.

The Winter protest's insistence on what intellectuals and activists of the Summer called economistic demands (rather than on some presumed 'superior' political demands) was presented as proof of the former's 'political incompetence' to 'see the bigger picture' and think 'rationally' about politics, rather than merely through the prism of what intellectuals saw as their 'narrow' (material) perspective, which the intellectualist narrative takes to be mystified and irrationalised. In other words, economic disadvantage (in terms of class) was consistently pinned as cultural disadvantage (in terms of rank) and used as justification to deny political power. In essence, through its juxtaposition with the Summer protest here, the

moral basis of February's utility bills protest was denied: for the intellectuals who attacked the Winter mobilisation and endorsed the Summer one, making economic demands could not be seen as 'moral' and 'being about values'.

There are grave problems attending these claims. First, intellectuals clearly failed to recognise the fundamentally moral underpinning of a protest's 'economic' demands which, in essence, insist on the right to subsistence and human dignity. Instead, they seemed to subscribe to a fallacious definition of morality as pertaining to the *spiritual* as opposed to the *material* – a binary which mystifies the dependent position of the former on the latter, and which is clearly mobilised for the political purpose of delegitimation and exclusion, a binary which is also all the while employed by people whose own relative material privilege is conveniently ignored. Denying the moral underpinning of demands for just pay for one's labour, and for the right to a dignified life not constricted by poverty and oppression, effectively functions within an explicitly anti-egalitarian and anti-emancipatory ideological framework. It reflects a particularistic conception of morality which in its effects contradicts and cripples the conditions for the emergence of what are *universal* forms of human flourishing (see Sayer 2006). Second, arguing from within the logic of their own perspective, the stance that intellectuals take here runs counter to their own self-avowed position of 'moral authority': such an arrogant, condescending and particularistic stance fails to live up to what is commonly accepted as a social position of responsibility which involves a defence of *universal* values, that they claim for themselves. In its implications, it is further inherently anti-democratic, which, once again, sharply contradicts their own post-1989 anti-communist narrative which had the concept of authentic democracy at its heart.

The intellectuals' attack on the February protests and unqualified championing of the Summer mobilisation, rests precisely on the 'rank' logic of social stratification that Zarycki (2015: 716) describes: it was "employed to legitimise the economic hierarchy" where it applies to those who possess lower cultural capital, effectively (be it intentionally or inadvertently) calling for the maintenance of deprivation both in class and in rank terms for strata 'beneath'. Yet, this same social group – of intellectual-protesters – simultaneously attempted to challenge economic inequalities pertaining to groups possessing higher cultural capital in the summer of 2013 when they explicitly took the side of what they called 'the beautiful and the smart middle classes', thus re-negotiating power imbalances at the 'higher' end of the dominated strata, but failing to bother themselves with the lower sections of the dominated classes. Following Skeggs (2005), who herself draws on Bourdieu's understanding of cultural and symbolic capital, we can see how bodies come to be differentially inscribed with political value, creating classed, as well as – as we saw in the last chapter – racialized hierarchies of 'person-value' (ibid.): the presence of people whose 'looks' contained lower class markers, as well as of Roma protesters on demonstrations, was used as grounds to deny the legitimacy of the protest. Here, class is 'an operator of conflict' (Ranciére 1999: 83). What the (possible) sources of such selective advocacy on the part of a large group of intellectuals are will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

Sometimes in euphemised language, at other times in conspicuously exclusionary terms, this dichotomic interpretation of the two protest waves was often emphatically reiterated by many intellectuals and activists and it was enthusiastically picked up by media. The liberal newspaper Dnevnik (the liberal 'Kapital' newspaper's daily) consistently referred to the June protests as 'the revolution of the thinking [people]'. What is more, in a subtle but very consistent tactic of 'making invisible', both this newspaper and many liberal intellectuals consistently referred specifically to the Summer protest as '*the* protest', excluding the February mobilizations as something different/undeserving of the name and of attention.[11]

'HEALTHY PROTEST BODIES': ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE RACISM

In Gospodinov's text (line 35 to 41), we further discern the (also elsewhere reoccurring) theme about the necessity to protect the protest's 'purity'. With the metaphor in lines 40/41 the author represents DANSwithme as a healthy body which needs to eject 'foreign bodies' that do not belong to it, such as 'provocateurs' (violence-prone 'hoodies'), 'professional revolutionaries' (presumably paid by interested political parties[12]), as well as nationalists; it is vital, Gospodinov argues, that the protest's body 'develop[s] an immunity' towards these. This plea from some of the liberal intellectuals partly came in response to the many occasions on which the Summer protest crowd shouted anti-Turkish cries. The racist chants at the demonstrations were accompanied by an abundance of anti-Turkish discourse online: there were for example caricatures and collages portraying the extreme-right leader, who supported the coalition (of BSP and MRF), as traitor ('enichar' or 'Turk') and depicted wearing a Turkish hat. The anti-Turkish (and often anti-Roma) language was also widespread as Peevski was a member of the Turkish minority Movement for Rights and Freedom (MRF) party. All of this made the nationalist/racist slant of the Summer protest often look stronger than it was during February (when, the reader will recall from the previous chapter, the 'revolutionary fight' was often framed along ethno-nationalist lines). This time around, however, the significance of the chants 'You're Turkish' and 'enichars' was played down by intellectuals 'analysing' the protests – these chants were attributed to 'provocateurs', to 'radical elements', to 'foreign bodies' who are 'below this protest's level' (Gospodinov's text, line 37), rather than bearing the entire truth of the protest.

Yet, back in February, Gospodinov and many other intellectuals had dismissed what they often also called the 'bills protest' as one that altogether belongs to these 'radical elements'. At the same time, an examination of the online discussions back in February shows that amongst protesters at the time, the fear of 'provocateurs' who would radicalise and thus 'defile the protest' was very much present too: many in 'the people's protest' of February seemed to want theirs to be peaceful just as much as 'the middle class's' protest of the Summer did. This is also evident in one of the most scornful attacks against the Winter protest: in his satirical article on the February protest, titled *'Notes on the Tumult'*, Toni Nikolov (2014a), a famous liberal intellectual, mocks the fear he heard expressed in the Winter street demonstrations from 'provocateurs', thus attributing to the *entire* protest a radical,

irrational, unenlightened and absurd character. Yet, in an interview with me several months after the start of the Summer protests, he dismissed racist and nationalist language as no significant factor in the Summer protest, saying:

> [The summer protesters] had an extraordinary civic consciousness. No cynicism . . . Well, now, there was one problem: in the first days there appeared, in the first how many . . . may be three-four days of the protest, there also appeared the nationalists, who logically stormed in . . . who were shouting 'You are Turkish' and so on, right, [but] within the protest there was a very firm talk about this not being the right thing to shout. Ultimately, these boys lost interest very quickly. The protest went on for very long. But in any case, [the protest] was very consistent, which is unique, apart from its second unique feature – that it didn't want [low price] electricity, social justice for poor people . . . and in any case I call the protest very consistent: it's clear that the range of educated people there was very high. . . .
>
> (excerpt from interview with me, taken 13th June 2014)

What is more, Nikolov, again in the interview he gave to me, shared that "there are never Roma on the protests". When I challenged this, reminding him that there were Roma people present in the crowds of the February protests, he argued in an astonishingly sarcastic tone of voice:

> Yes yes, I know, but this also poses a lot of problems, I mean, not a lot of problems, but a lot of questions – when they come to protest [laughs], you know that we are always suspicious of whether they come spontaneously . . . right . . . Well I've asked them . . . when I ask them they start . . . because I've seen them several times, there were small groups which appeared also at the summer protests, right, and you immediately become interested, you go and ask them something, they . . . wave [your question] away, 'don't ask' [they say], right, they disappear, right . . . no, no, no, it is not exactly the way it looks, right, it's clear that somebody has hired them. Very often, even once they had come to us, but it turned out they had to be at the counter-protest, they had got confused . . . with a placard, something was written, one [Roma man] had come with a placard for Peevski [laughs], they wanted to beat him [laughs], and he was so frightened because he can't read . . . The most interesting thing was, I loved to take pictures of them, I had a lot of pictures collected somewhere . . . 'No to the Capital circle and to Ivo Prokopiev' [carried] one such tattered [man] obviously regular reader of the Capital newspaper, right [laughs] . . . And the even funnier instance was . . . my teacher, professor Tsocho Boyadjiev, told me that he was together with Sasha Bezuhanova and there were Roma on the [unintelligible], we were watching them from the university [balcony] and one [man] who was carrying [placard] 'No to Bezuhanova', somebody from Razgrad, right, and she says, 'Come, come, let's meet', and he looks at her, there's her photo on the placard but he doesn't recognise her, right, and he can't understand what this woman wants from

him, [he is] frightened, they are [always] very frightened, he can't figure out what this well-dressed woman would want from him. . . .

The anti-Roma pattern that emerges here illustrates obvious contradictions in the self-avowed liberal outlook of at least some of these Bulgarian intellectuals. At the same time as ensuring nationalists' illiberal rhetoric is banished from the protest, they also displayed euphemised, but particularly strong racism in their own discursive and non-discursive practices. The liberals' illiberal language will become even more evident with more examples I offer in the next section which deals with the counter-protests, so I will return to it later in this chapter.

'HEALTHY PROTEST BODIES': 'AUTHENTIC REVOLUTIONARIES' VS.
'HUNGRY RIOTERS'

In addition to the nationalists as a 'foreign body' to eject, protecting the protest's 'purity' also seemed to involve banishing violence-prone 'rioters of the February type'. Here's how Evgenii Dainov, one of the most popular liberal intellectuals ('transition expert' [Lavergne 2010]), saw the difference between the 'authentic revolutionaries' (of the Summer) and the 'rioters' (of February, who the Summer protest 'needed to protect itself from'):

> [A] riot is [something] rotten, a riot is about breaking into shops and burning cars. And in the Bulgarian revolutionary tradition, you should highlight this very strongly,[13] there has been no looting of shops and burning of cars. And every time a revolutionary event unfolds, one of the main tasks of let's say the more experienced revolutionaries is to prevent the looting of shops and burning of cars. This is a [pure] riot, this is not . . . because, you see, the riot of the hungry is not a revolution. The hungry want somebody to give them . . . the riot of the hungry is not a revolution, those who burn and loot shops . . . In Bulgaria during revolutionary events the Bulgarians are highly politically savvy, they don't make mistakes, they don't turn the revolution into a riot of the hungry, they never break [things]. What they break and smash are official [public] buildings, they storm the Bastille – that is legitimate, but they never storm the grocer's shop – that is not legitimate.
>
> (excerpt from interview with me, taken 4th June 2014)

The key statement explicitly made here, but also in Gospodinov's and Nikolov's texts and in dozens of other intellectuals' analyses, seems to be that not everybody 'belonged' to the *DANSwithme* protest, and in Dainov's words, 'the brawny and the tattered' (from interview) – least of all. It is also particularly worth noting that such exclusion did not take place only on a discursive level. It materialised in the physical exclusion of 'suspiciously looking people' within the Summer protesting crowd: whenever potential provocateurs were spotted, protesters would physically encircle (enclose) them and call police officers to arrest them. Such physical exclusion also took place back in February, when, as Dainov recalled in the interview

he gave to me, the two "different streams of protesters" (Dainov, in the interview – referring to the 'bills protest', as they often called the Winter one, and a 'green protest' [of mostly liberals] which took place at the same time and which Dainov was part of) stood separately and never mixed in one single march on the streets of central Sofia.

Going back to the fragment from Dainov's interview, the key narrative he offers of the Summer protest is in line with the numerous others (some of which I reviewed earlier), which posited the protest as not a 'riot of the hungry', but a 'real revolution' (lines 6/7). In this way, a key identity was built for Summer protesters: that of (authentic, legitimate) 'revolutionaries' who bear sanity and progress, and who need to keep the 'hungry rioters' out of the protest. With the provided, Dainov also makes a very specific political argument: anti-state protests are legitimate (rational, good), whereas class (anti-capitalist) protests are not. And since the protest of 'the hungry' harbours the risk of starting such an 'illegitimate' revolution, the class best suited to conduct 'a real revolution' is the middle class – those who are not hungry and tattered: 'the normal', 'the decent', the 'civilised' class in Dainov's and other intellectual-protesters' view.

This is then one of the more explicit articulations of the historical class struggle which underpinned the mobilisations of 2013: put in rather crude terms, the conflict that transpired was practically between a more radical and a more conservative line of contention. The former *was designed by and for the subaltern groups*, those who lacked both economic and political power, and whose radically egalitarian democratic programme called for not just the eradication of corruption, but for more participatory forms of democracy, for social justice and for freedom from want. The latter, on the other hand, was designed *by the group of intellectuals, for the middle classes*, in whose imagined figure the intellectuals saw the historical strata capable of advancing the projects of modernisation, Europeanisation, and decommunisation that they championed. In this sense, the discourses of many of the Bulgarian intellectuals during the summer of 2013 resembled efforts to launch a sort of passive revolution (Gramsci 1971) which aimed to institute large-scale, but not radical, social change whose contours would be determined by (and ultimately serve the interests of) the *cultural elites* of the post-1989 liberal-capitalist order, thus actively inhibiting popular initiative in an organised political form (in Gramsci's words, carrying out a 'revolution without revolution'). I will return to this argument once again later in this chapter when I discuss the historical socio-economic conditions for the emergence of such a 'historic bloc' (Gramsci 1971). Before that, let us examine one more text that appears to draw together most of the exclusionary operators – those discussed so far and more – in one place.

'HEALTHY PROTEST BODIES': 'THE KNOWLEDGEABLE,
THE CAPABLE, AND THE WORKING'

This is how a famous journalist, Nikolai Staikov, picked the same line Gospodinov, Dainov, Nikolov and many other intellectuals took on, in an article titled 'The

Protest of the Knowledgeable, the Capable, and the Working' (Staikov 2013a) in the same newspaper, *Dnevnik*:

> This protest is different. It started spontaneously on Friday at 18:30 after everyone had finished their work for the week. . . . The working and busy people are now on the street and protest. Precisely at 18:30 . . . Don't confuse these with the others who go out [on the street] an hour or two earlier. Precisely this an hour or two [difference] will tell you that these are paid protests, like the ones in front of the parliament on Sunday for example.[14] These are usually people who have been paid to come [to protest] or have been forced into coming. . . .
>
> The people who come at 18:30 are also not the same as those who stay until midnight to wrangle with the agitki of noisy parties. Our protesters are busy on the next day, even if it's a weekend. They need to finish [the working day], so that they can calmly go out and protest against the corrupted, the unprincipled and the arrogant who happened by accident in June 2013 to be behind the wheel of their, no, our, future.
>
> we can say – the capable, the knowledgeable and the working protest differently. They #smile, [they] #bring their children, #and their pets, #their messages are impromptu, just real, #their slogans are not cast in a heap from a sterile party creative department.   '
>
> If we allow ourselves to dream for a little while, we will see that these children will remember their parents as fighting and active people, who stand up for their values despite their daily worries and work. And they will [grow] to become the same. Let us dream, it is not so scary.
>
> And please don't average them[15] – these are not people in the middle, but normal and independent people, who can survive without the state, but the state can hardly survive without them. . . . This protest is different. These protesters somehow manage to pay their bills, but don't want to live with politicians who can't be taken responsible for the failing state. This is definitely my kind of protest.

Let us fist take note of some formal characteristics of this text. The characterisation of the protest in Staikov's text includes both direct characterisation (the able, the knowing, the working, the busy) and indirect characterisation (they smile, they bring their children, their messages are real, etc.),[16] which depict them as 'positive', 'peaceful', 'authentic' – all strategies discernible in many other texts. These 'descriptions' are very powerful means by which new subjectivities are constructed and enforced. The nominalization in line 12 and, indeed, in the title itself helps to essentialise the protesters: knowledge, capability and productiveness become defining features which are presumed to not only define the *DAN-Swithme* subjectivity but to also demarcate them away from other protesters. And an even more direct form of such differentiation becomes explicit in another characterisation strategy in both this article and all I have reviewed previously – making use of *negative description*: describing what protesters are *not* (or who

they are not). A consistent observation can be made here: such negative description does not just lend a rhetorical effect (e.g. working on a subtle emotional level), but serves to etch out an identity which justifies its struggle by virtue of being different. Although differences in all of these texts are explicitly stated – difference is opened up, rather than reduced – these assertions of difference do not reach any forms of actual confrontation and polemic: there are no moves towards negotiating (and resolving) differences so as to reach and form alliances. Instead, authors consistently expose divergent (to their own) views in a satirical manner and in this way separating, fragmenting and ridiculing them, leaving no possibility for dialogue between them. There is thus a lack of any attempt to discursively reduce differences between distinct groups and their interests and positions (smooth them into an apparent consensus) in order to form alliances (or in Laclau's words, 'chains of equivalence') and thus increase the chances for the protest's success against what appear as the common enemy (corrupt economic and political elites). Instead, we see discursive strategies of *accentuating* differences in order to mould the self-identity of the Summer protest and, in the process, set up a particular relationship between Summer protesters and all others – that of superiority and higher legitimacy. national-popular initiative is effectively not only ignored; it is actively rejected.

Now, with the help of these examples of the most common patterns of lexicalisation, we can reconstruct the contents of the 'norm' against which intellectuals' 'analyses' judged the 'authenticity' and 'normalcy' (see beginning of this section) of the protesters gathering on the streets of Sofia in June. The 'authentic' and 'normal' protester identity constructed by intellectuals and activists of the Summer protest was one who 1) reads (is cultured), 2) (nominally) identifies with liberal political views, and 3) works a nine to five (cognitive) job (which allows them to be at the square protesting in the evening [see Staikov's text earlier], and to pay their taxes and bills). What is particularly key to highlight here is that these conceptions about the 'good citizen' were not newly-formulated and/or coercively enforced during 2013; manufacturing consent and support for these took place over the years of the 'transition', when the body of liberal ideas which these conceptions are part of, acquired a hegemonic status in the 'transitional common sense'. The conception of the 'working citizen' derives its 'attractiveness' and 'prestige' (Gramsci 1971) from the (neo-)liberal set of ideas that celebrated the self-sufficient, productive, economically independent individual, reliable member of the free market, who contributes skills, capital and resources to the economy. The conception of the 'liberally minded citizen' was of course particularly central to the post-1989 decommunisation and Europeanisation projects discussed in Chapter Four: to be able to 'shed' their 'communist mentality', in this framework, one needed to emulate the political and cultural West. Finally, the conception of the *'educated citizen'* was again central to the normative grammar imposed by the liberal consensus after 1989: its contemporary 'prestige' and legitimacy can be traced back to the intelligentsia's discourse on civil society in the 1989–1990 protest demonstrations (see Chapter Four), which posited a notion of civil society as comprised of educated, cultured, 'cultivated' (and in Adam Ferguson's words,

'polished' [1995]) individuals, who constitute this 'free' avant-garde whose role it is to *lead* the way of the 'ignorant masses' away from (pre-modern) 'blindness' and onto 'enlightened' modernity.

In this sense, if in the Western classical liberal philosophy of seventeenth to eighteenth century England, the conception of the 'free individual' was specifically confined to the 'propertied man' which granted him the right to vote, then in post-transitional Bulgarian (and East European generally) liberal 'common sense', the conception of the 'free individual' is confined to the *educated* citizen who has (exclusive) access to political *rational* thinking, which gives them the right to claim *valid* political agency. I will return to the implications of these articulations later in the chapter. For now, what is important to highlight is that the text fragments discussed previously seem to make a very specific political argument: the political agent constituted previously is very explicitly indexed to an imagined middle class, which is seen as the dominant part (of the dominated strata) that is the only one that is able to, and must define the political, economic and social contours of the changes (changes that are otherwise desired by all dominated strata).

This argument further needs to be seen in relation to the counter-hegemonic attempt of the Winter protests. When examined in relation to each other, the two appear as a struggle over the 'revolutionary' subject position (which is embodied by the concept of 'civil society'): the Summer protest effectively attempted to re-stake a claim on the monopoly of the 'revolutionary' subject position, since the hegemonic liberal project-vision of the 'transition' persistently imagined the middle classes as the revolutionary, progressive agent, struggling against what they saw as the conservative communist remnants of post-1989 Bulgaria. It is to this struggle that I turn to in the next section. Before that, however, I wish to elaborate on the emotional appeal of the ideological articulations described thus far, by tracing the potentially utopian surplus they might be seen as harbouring, in order to understand what made the frames contained in these texts attractive to so many, and thus – dominant.

THE INTERLACE OF THE IDEOLOGICAL AND THE UTOPIAN
IN THE EXCLUSIONARY PRACTICES OF THE SUMMER PROTEST

I wish to point the reader's attention back to several segments of two of the texts I discussed earlier. In his text, Gospodinov asserts there is:

A crisis of meaning, a deficit of future

The numbers don't solve all problems. . . . What we're observing is the failure of the experts, not only here [in Bulgaria] by the way. Yes, it is good to have experts, but expertise is always after morale. Economics is after ethics. Because an expert without morals is only a useful instrument in the hands of whoever buys him, [in the hands] of any oligarchy.

Not unlike in February when Gospodinov discerned in the protests an existential crisis of the people 'who don't know what to do with their lives',[17] he once again

sees not only a politico-economic crisis, but an existential one.[18] Yet, in the Summer protest, people are narrated as having finally pointed the accusatory finger at the 'right' place: it is not the high bills, the foreign-owned energy companies, or politicians en masse, that should get the blame, he appears to argue. For the author, what is wrong instead is the lack of morale among the (post-)communist political elites. Gospodinov is far from a lone voice here – most activists and intellectuals emphatically reiterated a demand for 'morale in politics'. This became one of the key slogans of the Summer protest, it is also one of the keys to understanding how and why many of *DANSwithme*'s claims became so 'attractive', winning the 'hearts and minds' of thousands of people, including many whose interests could hardly be reconciled with its body of ideas. This is because it holds the key to what I claim is the utopian impulse of *DANSwithme* – that is, those authentic utopian impulses which were able to procure genuine support for its claims.

It is hard to deny that in general the call for 'morale in politics' harbours critical potential since it invokes a utopian impulse anticipating the promise of transformed socio-political conditions – a philosophy of political governance which would be guided by principles of fairness, rather than by the corrupt drive for personal wealth underpinning the capitalist common sense. In this sense, Gospodinov's (and others') anti-expert stance and call for 'ethics' – that goes beyond individual self-interest and is in many ways anti-capitalist – discourse reveal a utopian core harbouring critical potential, which is at the same time what ultimately thwarts such potential, since in its drawing to itself, it simultaneously draws to the ideological husk it is articulated within, and reinforces the latter. In other words, Gospodinov's delusive elitist humanism comingles with an authentic longing for a fairer and ethical social condition, which is essentially what made these ideas attractive to so many.

Similarly, Staikov's text reveals an equally utopian vision of protesters' 'mission' as a highly moral one that itself epitomises the process of achieving the 'erect position' of the 'upright gait' that Ernst Bloch talk about:

> If we allow ourselves to dream for a little while, we will see that these children will remember their parents as fighting and active people, who stand up for their values despite their daily worries and work. And they will [grow] to become the same. Let us dream, it is not so scary.

Here again, we see a very conspicuous interlace between a utopian image of the 'feat' of the Summer protester in standing up against oppression, which is articulated in the subtle ideological juxtaposition to the supposed 'defeat' of Winter protesters whose 'daily worries' (such as bills) have arguably prevented them from 'standing up' for presumably 'higher goals'.

Paradoxically, what we witness in these discourses can be taken to resemble elements of what were called 'total utopias' characteristic of the nineteenth century. 'Total utopias' generally draw on Enlightenment values and beliefs such as secular optimism, the ultimate perfectibility of humans, and history as a record of progress (Gardiner 1992).[19] In the nineteenth century they were practically the ideological

expressions of the ascendant bourgeoisie in the context of Western post-Feudal European society (ibid.). The supply source of the utopian elements in the texts reviewed in this chapter is a great variety of fragmented (and often incoherent) ideas, many appropriated from Western liberal philosophy and others grounded in local conceptions of the human and their relationship to society. Thus, for example the focus on the reading, cultured citizen-individual can be seen as grounded in the utopian core body of ideas which underpinned Western liberalism (elaborated particularly in the work of John Stuart Mill, with the rise of industrial capitalism in Western Europe) – one based on a *developmental* model (Macpherson 1977) which sees humans as capable of infinitely developing their individual faculties and capacities, in a society whose function must be to facilitate this life-long educative process (Donald and Hall 1986). And the more general utopian core of the Western liberal vision of a world of free individuals coming together in civil society co-habits with a more collectivist longing for belongingness to a community and a will-ingness to transcend individual pure self-interest in the name of a collectivity and of future generations (see last text excerpt), all of which constructs a sturdy utopian packaging ('embellishment' in Blochian terms) which procures enthusiastic support for (rather than just manufacturing consent to) an essentially particularistic political agenda. Here, not unlike in February then, we witness a "heterodox manifestation of a diffuse 'utopian impulse'" which is "ultimately concerned with the satisfaction of unfulfilled needs and the perennial human desire for autonomy and voluntaristic solidarity" (Gardiner 1992: 26) – impulses which garb and embellish some very particularistic and anti-emancipatory political ideas. Ultimately, however, as Bloch says in his short analysis of Marx's treatment of man and citizen: "So long as the bourgeois freedoms are more bourgeois than free, it is quite natural to test the right of man against their ideological content" (Bloch 1965: 202).

In the following discussion, I continue to explore the discursive lines of the division outlined previously, but no longer in terms of the 'inner foreign body to eject', but in relation to the outright 'enemy' the *DANSwithme* protest sees as needing to 'overcome'.

Protest and counter-protest: 'the two Bulgaria-s'

In addition to the rhetoric described thus far – dealing with who (should) belongs to the protest and who doesn't – even more blatantly discriminatory and exclusion-ary language was used to delegitimize groups who stood in *opposition* to the *DANSwithme* protest – opposition groups came from what became known as 'counter-protests' as well as from some leftist intellectual circles. On the days of the counter-protests, media offered numerous reportages and photo galleries of people who were consistently described as poor, 'ugly', 'destitute', building a frame for the counter-protest as a hotbed of social outcasts. Public commentators and journalists raced to show photos and interviews with poorly-dressed and uned-ucated Roma people in an attempt to expose what they saw as the 'ridiculousness', 'absurdity' and 'inauthenticity' of the counter-protest. The overall message, as Tsoneva (2014: 256) notes, was that "these Gypsy and Turkish people do not

belong to Sofia and its civil society". Again, a plethora of 'analytical' commentaries by various intellectuals appeared in the public sphere, attempting to describe what was going on.

In a famous speech which circulated the public sphere, Kalin Yanakiev, a theologian and a popular conservative public intellectual, proposed that the protests and counter-protests can be best understood as a clash of the *'quality'* against the *'quantity'* of Bulgarian society:

> [T]his protest is the protest of the Bulgarian quality against the Bulgarian quantity and I don't shy away from saying this. In no way. Finally, the Bulgarian quality has to be heard. This protest is an incredible celebration of civic creativity and sense of humour. Whoever doesn't like it is a talentless conservative. It is extremely joyful on the square . . . Wonderful performances, gleaming, incredibly beautiful, yes, and erotic on top of that. What's wrong with that? This is the city's culture, my dears, the city's culture is spectacular, sharp-witted, a culture of the gesture, of artistic-ness. Just compare it to the grumpy talentless-ness of the counter-protest. . . .
>
> (Yanakiev 2013)

The exclusionary and very often blatantly racist statements (as many Roma and Turkish people were seen and targeted at the counter-protests) of which the provided is only a small fragment, meant to effectively strip the counter-protest of legitimacy through denying them membership in *civil society*. Apart from being yet another instance of blatantly exclusionary representation, this is again a political argument suggesting 1) it is a particular class – here conceptualised as that of 'the quality' – that is capable of, and has the legitimacy to, bring on political, economic and social change; and 2) it is against a particular other class – that of the 'quantity' – that the struggle should be waged against, or as Yanakiev continues:

> the people protesting in Sofia and larger cities refuse to tolerate the political dictate of two parties (BSP and MRF), which get [parliamentary] majority not because they have supporters, followers and 'partisans', but because they have ensured that a large part of the Bulgarian population is feudally dependent for their basic subsistence on their 'chiefs', 'businessmen', 'dons' [masters] in their regions; [they have ensured] that for their hollow pockets some 50 (or even 10) levs is more than enough of a reason to vote in favour of him who's given it to them. In short – they've ensured that they can always rely on a pure quantity, which they do not need to form into a (particular) political quality. . . .
> In Bulgaria, obviously this pure (political) quantity is critically large and has, finally, triggered the revolt of the – numerically smaller – political quality.
>
> [W]hy should I put up with my fate being determined – constantly, for two decades already, by pure quantity? [. . .] The problem is that my fate (and that of the people of political 'quality') is being determined not even by the 'horrible communists' and 'Turks' etc. It is determined by people, who in their political value are a circle zero:[20] they don't know the name of the prime

minister of the executive power they have themselves 'elected', they allow themselves to be 'loaded' on buses for political demonstrations, whose aim is unclear to them. [They] have one, and only one, value – that they are many. And they are many because the money with which their votes were bought is a lot and is in the hands of those who buy them, and not in their [hands].

Once again, we come across the conception of the ('normal') *minority* which stands against the ('abnormal') *majority*. In Yanakiev's texts, the distinction acquires a particularly absurdly elitist, inegalitarian and outright social Darwinist character. Here Agamben's distinction of forms of life drawing on the Greeks' notions of *zoe* ('bare' or 'reproductive life'), and *bios* ('a qualified form of life') strike as particularly pertinent. The 'majority' of the wretched 'quantity' – zoe – is banned from the domain of political life, and reduced to its biological being; the 'minority' of the selected 'quality' – bios – on the other hand has exclusive access to the *polis*. As absurd for the contemporary era as Yanakiev's distinction may sound, it was enthusiastically embraced by numerous other intellectuals, journalists and activists.

Another metaphor which dovetailed the provided, and which too became popular and widely used is Tony Nikolov's metaphor that suggests there are 'two Bulgaria-s'. It too started from an analysis of the protests and counter-protests which Nikolov (2014b) published in the weekly high-culture newspaper *Kultura*, and the liberal daily *Dnevnik* reprinted

[T]hese are two Bulgaria-s which cohabit painfully in their present, and even more problematically in their past. Two Bulgaria-s in black and white, which paint [each other's] monuments in pink probably so that they don't wake up covered in blood. [These are] two Bulgaria-s which do not know how to talk to each other, not because they are different in language, satiety, beauty or affluence. But because they differ in their want for freedom. One [Bulgaria] belongs to those who anxiously worry about their future, let's call her *the still free Bulgaria*. The other [Bulgaria] is the feudalised and humiliated Bulgaria. Bulgaria of the people bussed into the protests and counter-protests. The counter-Bulgaria of un-freedom, ruled by the medieval methods of force.

The metaphor of the 'two Bulgaria-s' became a popular tool for depicting what public intellectuals saw as the key social division in Bulgaria today: one 'quality Bulgaria' which can afford to be independent and to value freedom more than 'material things' such as food and bills, and which was gathering on the daily *DAN-Swithme* marches, demanding 'freedom', 'morale' and 'European values' in the hope that these would put an end to the other – 'feudalised and humiliated' (line 8), 'grumpy'[21] and 'hungry[22] 'counter-Bulgaria' (line 9/10) of 'the quantity'. Paradoxically, in its core, this again harbours a distinctly utopian longing for a free and fair world where hunger and need won't determine people's lives and choices. Yet, such an authentically critical impulse then works to forge an appeal to the grossly particularistic and anti-emancipatory ideological construction within which it is

articulated. What is further important is that this conceptualisation underpins again a particular political argument – one that rests on a means-goal premise which is particularly exclusivist and elitist: the hungry and the humiliated have no place in the march for change, they have 'no part in the part' of civil society (Rancière 1999). What is more, it is precisely this 'Other Bulgaria' which has, in Yanakiev's words, 'triggered the revolt of the – numerically smaller – political quality'[23] and, significantly, is thus being defined as the 'enemy' to *struggle against*.

What seems to follow from all of this is that to at least part of the post-socialist intellectual elite, there has appeared a glaring gap between democracy as an ideal (or what they imagined and longed for in 1989) on the one hand, and real political democracy on the other. Convinced that large groups of the so-called 'losers' of the transition, finding it difficult to keep afloat in the post-1989 neoliberal environment, have become susceptible to political manipulation, these intellectuals seem to reduce the groups in such a predicament to what they see as a 'failure' to pass a sort of 'rationality test' to qualify as politically useful (as 'bios', rather than 'zoe'). Failing this 'transitional' political rationality test automatically sends them into the 'enemy' camp, side by side with the 'political manipulators' (ruling elites) to be struggled against. Although these 'masses' still have the formal political rights to participate in democratic processes, they are far from welcome at the polling stations or indeed on street demonstrations. What is more, a significant number of the Summer protesters and intellectuals advocated (and even started a petition) for an educational qualification for the right to vote on general elections. In this tremendously inegalitarian and anti-emancipatory frame, then, the struggle needed to be waged *against* the poor just as much as it had to be waged against the corrupt elites. In other words, the strategies described in the previous section of making subalterns' political existence invisible through failing to recognise their right to protest, was here stepped-up to a full-blown call for struggle against them, as evident in Yanakiev's revolutionary terms: the time has 'finally' come for the 'small political quality' to rise against the 'political quantity' (line 11). What is more, Yanakiev, a conservative theologician, is far from a lone voice articulating such claims. This is a theme which emerged in many liberal intellectuals' and activists' discourses, and was further eloquently developed in another seminal text during the turbulent summer of 2013. In what follows, I look at it closely.

The 'risen' (awaken) civil society of the middle classes

Georgi Ganev, director of the think-tank Institute for Liberal Strategies, took this theme up on a whole new level, developing what Tsoneva (2017) ironises as a 'class' analysis of the political protests. The image of *DANSwithme* Ganev sketched is a protest of the productive bourgeoisie which has waged a struggle against the crooked alliance – a 'coalition dance' – between the unscrupulous ('communist', Russophile, corrupt, etc.) political elite and the equally 'parasitic' poor on welfare (including the February protest) who provide the former with votes (and hence with political power):

> We are talking about a coalition, which has been forming for the past quarter of a century in Bulgaria, between the poor and the oligarchs. At that, the

leading role in this coalition, in this dance, is the oligarchs', and the poor only deliver electoral extras.

The mechanism of this coalition is very simple. When the coalition is in power, the poor are promised and given crumbles just enough to survive and to continue to vote in turn for promises for more crumbles. At the same time, of course, oligarchs eat the lion's share from theft via state bids, monopoly-rents, and criminal activity . . . So the decades-long dance of the coalition between the poor, stuck in a dead-lock, and oligarchs, pushed the Bulgarian society into the mud swamp that it is in now.

It is the Bulgarian bourgeoisie which stood up to this clear-cut coalition which attempts to achieve an eternal reproduction of poverty, dole and theft. Yes, bourgeoisie. Here I most shamelessly discard the euphemism 'middle class' and I, equally shamelessly, want to exculpate the word 'bourgeoisie' from the entirely undeserving smear it has been subjected to for over a century and a half. I'm talking about the bourgeoisie in its iconic meaning of a community of citizens. Of residents of the city, united by values, language, morals, common goals, shared virtues, forum for ideas, capacity to exist together and, yes, somewhere there amongst other things, [also] some sort of capability to produce and to trade so that they can be economically independent and so they can help others become economically independent and to get rid of poverty.

It is namely [the bourgeoisie] which is the enemy of the poor and oligarchs' coalition. It is namely [the bourgeoisie] that is the cash cow which supplies the alms for the poor, as well as the state, monopoly and criminal rents of the oligarchs. It is namely [the bourgeoisie] that is the social, political and, yes, economic opponent of the governing coalition. It is namely [the bourgeoisie] that wants Bulgaria to exit the swamp and to dance another dance, and it is looking for a state partner for [this new dance].

The oligarchs and the political technologists, even in their wretched ersatz Bulgar[ian] version, can manage to hold a fine balance between alms and constant reproduction of mass poverty, but they are helpless against the bourgeoisie – they don't know how to seize it, they are incapable of controlling it, they are powerless [when trying] to manipulate it. And what became crystal clear this summer is that somehow, somewhat invisibly, despite all odds . . . over just one generation's time, the Bulgarian bourgeoisie grew up, transformed, it is different, and it managed to horrify the ruling coalition.

The past tense used here is on purpose. This already happened. It is a historical fact. On the street and on social networking sites, these people are already together – in their language, in their values, in their morals, in their ideas, in their full diversity and contradictions. They already flew their flag, and from now on their social, political, and, yes, economic territory, can only expand – this is irreversibly set in the laws of democracy and, yes, of market economy.

What Ganev does here is the exact opposite of what Roland Barthes (1993) described as an 'ex-nominating operation': rather than making the bourgeois class apolitical and non-ideological by obliterating their name (as is commonly done),

Ganev instead openly nominates it in a bid to openly challenge the traditionally negative connotations involved. The goal here seems obvious – he is attempting to constitute it as the revolutionary force in an open call for social transformation. The plausibility and resonance of the claim that the bourgeoisie (or in other texts – the middle class) represents the authentic revolutionary force capable of bringing on social transformation, rests upon the successfully established 'common sense' of the 1990's hegemonic project of the 'transition to democracy and market economy': that for the latter to succeed, a rising middle class was of fundamental importance. What is more, by the very act of nominalising them in an open challenge to the traditionally negative stigma attached to the name, Ganev also aims to construct the bourgeois as a *counter-hegemonic* revolutionary force – launching a counter-offensive against the forces which have previously stigmatised the bourgeois as a hateful social position defined by the striving for gains. In this sense, Ganev launches a frontal attack on what he and many other intellectuals consider the 'communist remnants' in Bulgaria after 1989 which lurk from within both the political elites and the nostalgic (and 'ignorant') 'masses' who they vehemently blame for the current crisis.

What this, together with other similar texts, also seems to attempt to do is to collapse the difference between civil society (in Gramsci's terms *societá civile*) and bourgeois society (or what Marx and Engels [1974] referred to as *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*), blending the figures of the *citoyen* of the first and the *bourgeois* of the second. But to understand the reasoning behind this blending, we need to unpack the meanings attached to the concept of the bourgeoisie as used by intellectuals in the Bulgarian (post-socialist) context. Whereas Marx and Engels, in nineteenth century Western Europe, referred to the bourgeoisie as "the class of modern Capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labour" (cited by Rehmann 1999), which was different from other figures such as the 'Stadburder' (city-dweller) and the Mittelstand (middle classes), Ganev and other Bulgarian intellectuals employing this discourse, tend to use the concept in a very different (and broader) sense. Firstly, they tend to implicitly subsume within it the concept of the citizen (*grazhdanin*), both in its local meaning as *city-dweller* (see line 17/18 provided, and Chapter Four in this book) and *citoyen*, as well as the concept of the '*new middle class*' ('productive' class). The latter has come to refer to a post-1989 segment of the population of cognitive (or 'knowledge') workers who enjoy a higher social status, but not always higher earnings (economic status). It includes a broad range of cognitive workers, many of them from the booming information technology outsourcing sector in Sofia, as well as other types of cognitive (and 'creative') labour force, such as artists, journalists, NGO-workers, university staff, etc., and it finally tends to subsume small business entrepreneurs (see Nikolova [2014]). As I showed earlier, their articulation as a coherent political agent – as an entrepreneurial elite of creators of value (lines 21/22 of Ganev's text) – radically exclusive of the majorities dissatisfied from the liberal austerity regime since 1997, was central to the Summer mobilisations of 2013. By also blending in the concept of the *grazhdanin* (citizen/citoyen) in the discourse provided, Ganev subtly (and others much more explicitly) articulates the

notion of 'civil society' to the class position of this new middle/productive class, thus transforming the former into a heavily exclusionary operator.

This is further an articulation that derives its logic from the (intellectuals') ideologico-utopian project to 'catch up' and 'return to Europe' – a utopia whose historic class carriers in the Bulgarian context are not an industrial bourgeoisie class, but an intelligentsia class which saw the fulfilling of its utopia in the creation of a bourgeoisie class. This is of course a projection that is patterned after the historical development of Western modernity and the historical task of the bourgeoisie class in it. In other words, the intellectuals at the turn of the twentieth century (around independence from the Ottoman Empire), and at the turn of the twenty-first century (around the collapse of state socialism), placed a bourgeois class at the heart of their utopian projection of a 'civil' and prosperous future society; in their view, a growing bourgeoisie was/is meant to be the vehicle for getting to what's Not-Yet-Here (Bloch 1986). It is then in this light that we can see intellectuals' efforts during the summer of 2013 to narrate the protest as belonging to the middle/ bourgeois class – that is, as an attempt to articulate civil society to the class position of the former. In this way, the 'middle class civil society' is articulated as a collective political agent (a 'revolutionary' one at that) via narratives of shared politico-economic conditions (articulating itself as 'creators of value'), and via narratives of shared *socio-symbolic (cultural) power*. In this sense, although the differing discourses of the Winter and the Summer protest can be seen as reflecting certain class positions/conditions, these discourses were determined by some 'objective' class location only to a very limited extent. What mattered more was what these different groups desired to 'become' – that is, their class *aspirations*, and to what extent the powerful class of intellectuals was able to shape what these aspirations are. If the Winter protest longed to acquire the status of an agent of the 'national-popular will' (Gramsci 1971) which realises radical socio-political changes in virtue of its democratic legitimacy, the Summer protest wanted to become the middle class agent *leading* socio-political changes in virtue of the legitimacy of an intelligentsia-imposed utopian project to 'catch up' with Western Europe.

There is another important source of legitimation for the latter, which reflects the specific class transformations after 1989 and the importance of rank logic in the constitution of the post-1989 symbolic order and power hierarchies. After the collapse of the state socialist regimes in Eastern Europe, the material accumulation of previously state-owned resources was carried out by a motley of opportunist groups – often groups who had close ties to the former power-holders (see, e.g., Eyal, Szelenyi and Townsley 2000) – these were to become the new capitalist ruling elites in post-socialism. People's growing discontent with the speed of 'progress' (in the imposed framework of 'transition' towards a 'market economy and liberal democracy') gradually concentrated against these groups, seeing them as the 'unfairly risen', *non-meritocratically* ascended elite. The intellectuals along with large sections of the educated urban middle class felt particularly undeservingly disadvantaged in this new social order. Put crudely, it was a middle class that imagined its post-1989 position in society as dominant, or as (having a chance to become) 'big' bourgeoisie (in Lenin's sense) – an expectation engendered and nurtured by the intellectualist

narratives of the euphoric early 1990s (see Chapter Four in this book). In this way, their utopian longing for a meritocratic society couched an essentially particularistic desire to restore what they perceived as their rightful position and historical task in the 'catch-up' modernisation – a role and a project which they saw as 'stolen' from them by the communists back in 1944 and now again since 1989. In this sense, it was meritocracy, rather than democracy, that intellectuals and middle classes in Bulgaria, and more widely in the post-socialist space, desired.[24]

Their (ideologico-utopian) longing for a meritocratic society and for the restoration of what they imagined as their historical role as a modernisation force gradually seemed to crumble in the 1990s and 2000s. These 'undeservingly impoverished and disempowered' middle stratum groups then further finds themselves in need to constantly symbolically reaffirm their class position as simultaneously subaltern – that is, oppressed by an 'unworthy new ruling elite', and at the same time dominant in relation to the 'deserving poor'. The middle class in Bulgaria thus saw itself as simultaneously a dominant and a subaltern actor, employing an ambiguous combination of elite ambition and anti-elite critique. It is economically subordinate to the new (post-1989) economic and political elites and often finds itself in a precarious position; at the same time, it pursues a dominant position vis-à-vis what it perceives and calls the 'masses' (subaltern groups), relying on the rank logic described previously, to secure and expand its political influence. Its rhetoric about meritocracy then coexists with repressive and exclusionary discourse, which seeks to ensure its own culturally and politically dominant position (in relation to 'lower' strata). Such a hybrid identity of dominant and dominated then engenders their (knowing or unknowing) complicity in oppressive practices and in the reproduction of the post-1989 social, political and economic configuration of power inequalities.

This can be further illustrated by examining the ways the articulation of the 'revolutionary' role of the middle or bourgeois class occurs specifically in relation to what is seen as a 'coalition dance' – a 'toxic' alliance – between the poor and a *communist* oligarchic elite.

The anti-communism of the 'middle class civil society'

There was a very conspicuous continuation of the anti-communist line[25] liberal intellectuals and activists had taken during the Winter protests: narrating the transition as a communist plot. Not unlike the Winter mobilisation, the Summer protest often relied on conspiracy theories to spread its anti-communist fervour. These conspiracy narratives went along these lines: an immoral and evil communist elite, which pulled the strings from behind the stage, deformed the alluring idea of the transition, morphing Bulgaria's liberal capitalism into an ersatz version of its Western original; the main victim of this plot were the hard-working, 'productive', Bulgarian middle classes, and the perpetrator – a 'parasitic alliance' between the oligarchy and the poor, this narrative alleged.

As argued earlier, the contradicting popular narrative of February threatened to dislocate the dominant transitional identity established in the 1990s, and thus required a reaction which would reclaim whatever ground had been lost to the

'populists' of February. Part of the reaction in the exigency of such an ideological crisis then was to re-evaluate, or rather re-establish and thus validate, the 'truth' about both the communist and the postcommunist period in line with the imperatives of the liberal and capitalist course of future. An illustration of this can be seen in the attempts of some of the Summer protesters (also NGO activists) to justify painting Sofia's Soviet Army monument as an artistic expression of a political act of protest. In an open letter defending their act, they represented it as not just an expression of a political stance, but as part of a vital, universally significant effort to effect social change of momentous urgency (Genov 2013d):

> Our society needs a re-considering and a re-evaluation of our most recent past – the communist regime from 1944 to 1989. It is an undisputable fact that the party nomenklatura, knit together with the agent structure of the State Security, the repressive apparatus and the criminal contingent of the transition, defiled and destroyed the opportunity for Bulgaria to join the countries with a functioning democracy and a working free market that generates wealth. Throughout the years, politicians skilfully played with the public evaluation of the communist past and, despite it having been denounced and legally declared criminal; even today many are uncritically trying to rehabilitate Zhivkov and the regime imposed with repression and terror. In the environment of a controlled democracy and a crony economy, the debate and evaluation of the sins of the so-called transition are of a vital significance for our society.

In true conspiracy fashion, the 'communist enemy' in this frame is an underground (hidden) entity which needs to be exposed through a collective effort to re-evaluate the past – both communist and postcommunist. Only, now the 'red menace' is no longer the obtrusive, overbearing regime it once was; it is today rather surreptitious and in its clandestine ways seems equally malignant – so threatening that it is 'of vital significance for our society' (from the same text) that it is exposed (and thus discredited). In the next paragraph of this open letter, the activists reinforce the urgency of the 'threat' by representing the second wave of protests in June 2013 precisely as an expression of their resistance against the 'red menace'. They describe this second wave of protests as a crystallisation of the dichotomisation on which, to a significant extent, their political identity rests – that between the opposing camps of communists and anti-communists:

> The past 6 months of daily protests opened again the chasm of division. On one side of the chasm [there] are those who feel nostalgia or have built their present [lives] on the basis of their [social] links from the past. On the other side [of the chasm], [there] are all of us who look into the future and believe that free initiative and choice, the rule of law and the freedom of the individual are among the fundamental prerequisites for prosperity. The symbols and reminiscences which consciously or unconsciously vindicate the years of spiritual, moral and economic stagnation, are unacceptable and intolerable for those of us who look to the future.

The representation here is of the Winter protests as '*past-oriented*' and the Summer ones – of those who are '*future-oriented*' (where the past is delegitimized as being on the 'wrong side of history') and representing 'the future' – which can only be one – that of wellbeing based on 'free initiative and choice, the supremacy of the law, and the freedom of the individual' (lines 4/5). It is precisely through such gestures of denunciation of communism that the Summer protest attempted to re-establish the liberal consensus' hegemonic status.

The recurring motif that textures the same representation is once again that of the 'apathetic and voiceless majority' that appears as key to the communist apparatus's[26] mystificatory project (including those who 'dance in a coalition with oligarchs' in Ganev's text earlier). This 'majority' is presented as 'frightened and confused', and it is counterpoised and, more so, framed as posing a threat to the 'free in spirit', 'independent of state and party patronage', 'nucleus', or 'heart' of civil society, or as journalist Nikolai Staikov (2013b) summarises in another media text:

> [T]he protests against the government of Plamen Oresharski brought two pieces of news. The first one is good – there is civil society in Bulgaria. The second is not so good – the voice of citizens is weak, it is difficult for it to make its way through the media barrier, and it is easily manipulated and stifled. It faced a whole machine which generates counter-theses, counter-opinions and counter-media, whose ultimate goal is to confuse, manipulate society and to generate a real counter-reality.
>
> Unfortunately, we saw that this quiet civil war – fortunately of only a communication sort – marks the existence of an apathetic and voiceless majority of Bulgarian society. Propaganda managed to scare and confuse many people. . . . But we now know that there is a nucleus of people who are free in spirit and don't depend on state or party patronage to live dignified lives. These people are the heart of civil society. . . . In this one year, we learned to distinguish between real and fake opposition, and this is some very valuable social experience.

Articulating such a distinction between a 'real' (authentic) and a 'fake' (inauthentic) opposition (where opposition is understood as one against a 'criminal oligarcho-communist clique'), Staikov and other commentators underwrite the very notion of civil society. The 1990s common sense that envisioned civil society as a society of free citizens opposing a repressive state (see Chapter Four) seems to have now been reduced to a an elitist and exclusionary 'nucleus' of 'still free and thinking' value-creating middle class, engaged in a 'quiet civil war' (line 7) with a presumably uncivil society, or in their own terms – a *counter-civil society* – of the masses who "don't depend on state or party patronage to live dignified lives" (line 11), and whose claims to being part of civil society are hence declared inauthentic. Not only are subaltern classes subject to contempt and derision for their poverty and dependency, but they are also symbolically stripped of political agency.

The critics of the Summer protests

The Summer protest did draw critical fire of course. There were two main sources of critique targeted at *DANSwithme*. This came from some of the traditional leftist intellectuals (many but not all of whom supported the governing coalition of BSP and MRF), as well as from part of the Winter protest activists. They often sought to expose the elitist and exclusionary discursive and non-discursive practices of many of the *DANSwithme* activists/intellectuals. I look at some of their texts in the following discussion.

One of the most fervent (and most widely discussed) critiques of the elitism of the Summer protest came in the form of an article titled 'The Revolt of the Sated: Postcode Sofia 1000'[27] by former dissident journalist Velislava Dureva (2013), and published in the leftist daily *Duma.* It launched a highly emotional and vivid intervention on the tenth day of the protest. The author opened the text with an animated depiction of the February protest, followed by a vivid juxtaposition to the Summer protest:

February

They thronged the squares: desperate, angry, enraged, rabid, evil, hungry, poor, grumpy, forsaken, robbed, humiliated, downtrodden, devastated, voiceless, powerless, miserable, without a 'grain of hope, without a tomorrow and today, shaken, fed up, wretched. They spring up from the February cold, from their icy habitats – without roses/and songs/without music and drums/without clarinets, timbales/street-organs/cornets, trombones, trumpets. PR-less and money-less, jobless and programme-less, un-programmed and with no make-up. Not geniuses/talents/protestants/orators/agitators/fabricators/balloonists/pedants/writers and the desperation of a people, 'benumbed/humiliated/lower than the beggar/left brainless/nerve-less. . . .

June

They aren't worried about their electricity and their bread. They don't care about heating, child benefits, and pensions. They have their wonderful jobs and European salaries, they are secure and secured, shiny and polished, with pretentious CV-s, with their curriculum vitae of success, originating once upon a totalitarian time in the corridors of power. They spring up in the June's heat from within their offices, bureaus, directories, foundations, agencies, and administrations, thronging towards the square with music and drums. . . . All geniuses, talents, orators, operators, agitators, fabricators, writers, generals here and there, poets, restaurant owners, musicians, programme developers, artists and all sorts of PR specialists. They come for their latest party, for their joyful promenade on Sofia's streets – one celebratory march with children on shoulders (so they can [learn] to take communists down from an early age). . . .

"February is not June" said a young woman, invited on TV 'by chance'. 'Because. . . .' said the young lady (until recently – a PR of the interim

government), 'this is a protest of normality, of the young, the beautiful, the authentic, the intelligent, the inspired'. From which follows [the conclusion] that those, the February ones, are the ignorant, the muffs, a crowd of non-normals, dim-witted, ugly, disgusting and even fake.

Thus was drawn a sort of demarcation line between June and February, between the sated and the hungry, the thriving and the downtrodden, between elite and grassroots. Narcissistically and arrogantly. . . .

They don't protest for prices. But for values. They have no problem with the prices. But with the values. They are democrats, and all else are primates. And because they are democrats, those who are different, and who don't think as they do, are scum. . . .

Through the use of cacophony, alliteration, amplification and other literally devices, Dureva creates a disturbing atmosphere to convey a strong message of criticism towards the discursive and non-discursive practices of *DANSwithme*. In its essence, her text challenges the elitist and exclusionary language of the Summer protest. In exposing the latter's undemocratic and delusive character, Dureva also challenges *DANSwithme*'s very self-designation: that of democracy/freedom-fighters. Indeed, one of the most poignant paradoxes emerging from many of the texts I reviewed in this chapter is an apparent disarticulation of the anti-communist protesters of the 1990s away from 'democrats'. As Tsoneva, Stoyanova, and Medarov (2015) summarise, "[i]f at the beginning of the 1990s the liberal-capitalist discourse attempted to fix the transitional web of meanings (and with it – the imagined 'horizon' of the transition) by establishing the narratives of 'liberal democracy' and 'free market economy', today this web of discourses seems to be unravelling with a key element – that of 'democracy' – being discarded in the process". That is, the liberal 'freedom-fighters' of 2013 no longer fight for democracy. Democracy – as the system which gives the right to the greatest number to decide – no longer seems to be a priority for the liberal protester since what the democratic majority votes for, and protests for, often fails to reflect the liberals' agenda.[28]

Apart from being present in the critical discourse of leftist intellectuals, the discursive line about a clash between a 'real' and a 'fake' civil society also forms the basis of the criticism *DANSwithme* was subjected to by the Winter protesters. In my discussion of the February protest in the previous chapter, I briefly looked at one conspiracy narrative frequently employed by Winter protesters. It saw NGO activists and intellectuals as paid by hostile Western (mainly US) donors wishing to subvert Bulgaria's path to prosperity. This conspiracy narrative, which is itself older than the protests, together with the elitist language of the Summer protest, fuelled an intensely antagonistic discourse on the part of Winter protesters against the middle class 'fake' – corrupted by foreign money and working against people's interests – civil society.[29] This conspiracy discourse gave birth to the central label used by the national-popular protest to smear NGO activists and Summer protesters – '*Sorosoids*' – a pejorative term to refer to NGO experts, presumably paid by George Soros to advocate for

neoliberal policies, manipulate ordinary Bulgarians, and 'destroy the authentic [people's] civil society'. It is on such a construction of the clash that traditional leftist intellectuals, such as Dureva, based their critique of *DANSwithme*. This specific discourse's explicit anti-Western (and some illiberal) elements, and its reduction of the Summer protest to a conspiracy plot rather than to an event conditioned by an interplay between structural/systemic and agentic determinants, incapacitated its critical potential.

What is more, the counter-hegemonic discourse of February (and of the criticism against the Summer protest) was consistently co-opted by conservative, nationalistic and often far-right forces in the formal political arena, such as the nationalist party Ataka. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the latter entered the political scene as a 'national' alternative to what were seen as the 'comprador bourgeoisie' of the liberal expert-intellectuals. Presenting itself as anti-establishment (and thus counter-hegemonic), they consistently attack the dominant political and economic elites ('enemies of the people') as 'agents of multinational corporations and of the American foreign ministry', who used the paradigm of the transition 'to deceive and rob the Bulgarian people'. With the aid of such a construction of the 'enemy', these forces too attempted to stake a claim as 'genuine representatives' of an 'authentic civil society'. Parties such as Ataka claimed to uncover the mechanisms of the 'Atlantic and European plot', whose mediators were the liberal 'experts of the think-tanks ('Sorosoids') protesting in the Summer (as well as the political parties in power), and thence the imposed foreign model of 'civil society'. This further helped marginalise critical attempts levelled at the elitist and undemocratic discourse of the *DAN-Swithme* protest.

Overall then, many protesters in the summer of 2013 reflected on the 'movement' they participated in, drawing on a relatively homogenous set of discourses and tropes. The initially divergent voices of more leftist and of more rightist oriented factions, of more egalitarian and progressive and of more conservative and nationalist groups, were all forcibly smoothed out by intellectuals via strategies of pushing some discourses (and groups of people) out and silencing them, while at the same time promoting and legitimising others. In the apparent consensus manufactured in this way, a 'chain of equivalence' formed against an external and an internal 'enemy' – the political elite and the 'uncivil masses' respectively. The Summer discourse community was aware of, but did not recognise the legitimacy of competing definitions for social problems, and actively worked to exclude rival forms of thought. Their language was authoritative and absolute; it was *undialogized* (Holquist 1990). Although some of them openly defined the protest as the 'march of the middle classes' and others elided the use of class jargon through the euphemisation that it was a movement of 'normal' or 'decent' people, most agreed that this protest was 'different': it united not around common socio-economic interests, but owing to shared 'moral principles' and 'shared culture' that are 'above any politics'. Cultural commonality was seen as the main asset of the protest, as a manifestation of its moral virtue and worth. A 'cultural backwardness', expressed in communist nostalgia, on the other hand was taken as the constitutive element

of the enemy, both in its external form (the political elites) and in its internal form (the 'deluded masses').

One particularly distinctive feature of the Summer protest was its relative homogeneity of interpretation (as opposed to the democratic plurality of voices in February): NGO activists and liberal intellectuals – themselves protesters – had almost unrestricted access to important media outlets (compared to Winter protesters) and succeeded in using the power of both the written and spoken word to channel the interpretations of what was going on in a specific political direction – one that self-professed as liberal, pro-(Western-)capitalist, pro-EU, Russophobic, anti-communist, as well as rational, enlightened and 'beautiful'. Via the 'dramaturgical' character of their linguistic and non-linguistic practices, as well as via the *'self-reflexive'* texts they flooded the public sphere with, *DANSwithme* activists and intellectuals set up relationships of moral and intellectual superiority between themselves and the 'pseudo-political elite', but also between themselves and counter- and Winter- protesters. The identities which they established via language were those of *'the (risen) real civil society'*, *'the normal (European) citizens'*, *'bearers of progress and rationality'* and *'revolutionaries'* who would mark the beginning of a *cultural (r)evolution* – a sort of 'enlightenment' project to educate and inculcate in 'the masses' a liberal (also modern, and anti-communist) common sense. The nodal discourses they mobilised in the process, included those of *'morality'*, *'normality'* and, again, *'civil society'*.

The persistent identity-building strategy of differentiation (from other protesters) helped to dig a deeper social cleavage (whose contours had been etched out long before) between a 'productive' middle class' 'authentic civil society' (which is in possession of cultural capital), and a political/economic 'pseudo-elite' which only has economic capital) on the one hand, and as opposed to a supposedly non-productive (non-efficient), 'deluded' 'counter-civil society' of the 'masses' (which lacks both economic and cultural capital), on the other hand. The imagined 'counter-civil society' appeared, however, particularly threatening, since its numeric advantage was seen as giving them the power to abort (through voting and mass protest) the previously hegemonic liberal vision for the desired future social order – the one liberal intellectuals and 'transitional' experts long for. The elitist, particularistic, undemocratic and inegalitarian discourses of *DANSwithme* were ultimately ineffectively challenged for a variety of reasons. Of course, many of those who would have wished to challenge did not have access to communicative channels that allowed them to do so (as these are essentially the groups subjected to the most significant materially and symbolically conditioned political marginalisation and powerlessness). Many others, who did challenge the particularistic character of *DANSwithme*, pursued a conservative, nationalistic, and often far-right agenda. The progressive Left, on the other hand, was in a particularly weak and isolated position because of a twenty-five-year long ardent campaign aimed at annihilating the possibility for leftist critique in the country. Thus, the so-called quiet civil war[30] is set to continue, albeit with little optimistic signs of any potential for turning of the tables.

Intellectuals and middle classes in post-socialism: ideologico-utopian projections

Unlike the Winter popular protest, the Summer protest of 2013 did seem to eventually articulate the values that the intelligentsia embraced: it insisted on a new political and economic elite that would subscribe to certain moral standards and would uphold the 'values of freedom and autonomy'. Despite the protest being very heterogeneous at the beginning (when it was simply a mass demonstration of diverse groups of discontented people), its initial rationale matched perfectly the values and political agenda of the intelligentsia: as a protest that started as a reaction of moral indignation against a corrupt figure, its demands could easily be channelled and framed as a call for 'morality in politics' and against 'corruption'. These were the *valid* political concerns imposed by intellectual elites. These were the political demands that also enjoyed institutional support – international bodies (such as the EU), the local and foreign press, political parties, and even foreign ambassadors were delighted.[31] These also seemed to be the concerns which invited the least potential objection and had the capacity to procure public consent: after all, nobody would claim that morality and transparency are undesirable and that corruption is not a problem.

In its power to draw consensus, the intellectualist ethical discourse of morality and anti-corruption, however, serves to mask structural problems and impede systemic analysis of political and economic conflicts: the culprit is always the immoral and corrupt Eastern European/Balkan/Bulgarian politician, rather than any (inherent to the capitalist order) problematic symbiosis between private capital and political elites. The prevalent focus on the corrupt politician or state personnel consistently leaves the role of capital to stand in the penumbra of corruption, while continuing to delegitimize the state – seen as a hotbed for corruption. In this sense, intellectuals' moralistic discourse serves as an 'ideological displacement' which enables "structural conditions of a deep social, political and economic crises" to be seen as problems of individual behaviours (Dowling and Harvey 2014: 872). What is more, such individual (mis)behaviour on the part of state representatives is also consistently indexed to some presumed cultural inadequacy: 'this is not 'real' capitalism, only its phony Eastern European/Balkan/oligarchic/ersatz malformation'; in other words, it is local cultural deficiencies that prevent the flourishing of the free market economy, intellectual and political elites claim alike. Thus, the moralistic discourse of anti-corruption, with its triple focus on 1) the misbehaving *individual*, 2) the crooked or inefficient *state* representative, and 3) the flawed local *cultural habitus*, is consistently utilised to mask the structural flaws of the politico-economic system of capitalism itself. What is more, in reference to the latter, the possibility for procuring public consent to a narrative that attributes political and economic problems to some cultural deficiency needs to again be seen as historically enabled by the peculiar regional ideologico-utopian idea of 'catching up' with the modern West, which imagines the relationship between the locals (Eastern Europeans/Balkan/Bulgarian people) and Western Europe as one of inferiority, or in Blochian terms: a relationship of Not-Yet-there, requiring efforts to 'catch-up', which can be seen as a form of self-colonisation.

In pinpointing the corrupt state representative as the enemy in these narratives, the discourse of anti-corruption discerns the 'solution' in the figure of a highly moral (almost altruistic) group of private individuals who have somehow detached themselves from the local 'backward' and corrupt habitus, and who sport a heightened sense of civic consciousness. It is this phantasmic agent that was carved out of the motley of disgruntled people on the streets during the Bulgarian summer of 2013. As we saw in the previous chapter, this agency was dubbed '(the awoken) middle class'. In this sense, the intelligentsia-imposed 'middle class' frame of the Summer protest was prescription disguised as description, which thereby came to be capable of having constitutive effects on the real character of the protest – leftist groups who did not want to be identified with an elitist narrative ceased to attend the demonstrations within the first couple of weeks of the protest, leaving the ground to centrist and rightist pro-market oriented groups, who utilised the 'middle class' identity as an exclusionary tool to keep any leftist groups and more generally the popular ('irrational') masses out of the protest's lines.

Yet, to say that the groups forming the Summer protest were discursively articulated as a coherent political agent is not to say that their practices and interests emanated entirely from the discursive space (from intellectuals' discourses). The discursive work on framing the protest as described previously eventually led to the discursive and non-discursive [physical] withdrawal from the street demonstrations of groups who did not consent to the imposed frame: those who stayed then seemed to increasingly share a lot in common. In other words, although their 'grouping' in the Summer protest was discursively initiated, primarily through the imposition of the intellectuals' discursive frame, this articulation produced non-discursive effects in its consequences. Beyond the first couple of weeks of the protest, the persons who continued to form the core body of the protest not only actively or passively acquiesced to the dominant – middle class – frame imposed on the protest, but they *were* now those cognitive workers (described earlier) claiming for themselves the possession of higher cultural capital. Although there appeared to be both higher-income and lower-income groups, they consistently shared a high-status (rank) position (or at least imagined themselves to). Many of them can be described as 'the new petty bourgeoisie in Poulantzas' (1979) sense – that is, as *non-productive* (since the service industries do not produce surplus value, but contribute to its circulation and realisation) *salaried workers*. In Wayne's (2003) terms, many of these are cognitive workers who have higher remuneration than the lower ends of the working class, cultural privileges, and relative workplace independence (see also Fuchs 2010). In other words, although it started as a diverse inter-class demonstration by disgruntled people, the group that eventually dominated the protest, pushing others out of it, was of a divergent but relatively limited range of socio-economic backgrounds which shared a common self-identity as 'cultural elites'. Since their 'constitutive others' were both groups of higher economic standing (the economic and political ruling elite they challenged) and at the same time groups of lower economic standing (the subalterns they sought to push out of their political struggle), what united them was primarily their self-identity as 'cultural elites' which rested on a rank logic

(Zarycki 2015). Thus, it is important to understand that their articulation as a coherent political agent relies not simply on shared politico-economic conditions, but on an (imagined) shared rank position, based on socio-symbolic, rather than strictly economic or political power.

What is more, the category 'middle class' that intellectuals 'saw' and discussed in the Summer of 2013 they did not define in terms of a Marxist conception of class (based on economic power), but in terms of a Weberian/Bourdieusian notion of status/cultural capital. Subjectively, their political action was not grounded in class or group interests, but on a phantasm of civic altruism rooted in a normative self-valorisation as superior persons inhabiting a superior social (cultural) order. Such a political imagery resulted in violent political exclusions of marginalised groups who got excluded from the political sphere, whose voices were hardly heard and whose poverty was tolerated and even normalised – as long as it was not visible, as long as it did not declare itself present at the political forum, but hid itself instead in the ghettos and in small-town Bulgaria. More generally, such Weberian-derived class discourse frames class not as historically engendered, objective and antagonistic relation rooted in relations of production and exploitation, but as a result of cultural practices (Kelsh and Hill 2006); such classificatory moves on the ground then serve to occlude class consciousness and the class contradiction within post-socialist capitalism.

Budraitskis (2014) describes a very similar dynamic in the Russian protests of 2011–2012. The protest movement in Moscow at the time was defined by local intellectuals as "simply the movement of '*decent people*', united not around common social interests, but owing to shared moral principles and shared culture that are above any politics" (Budraitskis 2014: 1): "Cultural commonality was seen as the main virtue of the movement, as a testimony to its moral cleanliness, internal warmth and humanity, favourably different from the dry determinism of social communities" (based on shared politico-economic interest).

This 'commonality' Budraitskis refers to as a Mannheimian 'thought style' – the *style of the intelligentsia* (2014: 2). The link Budraitskis draws between the Russian intelligentsia's sense of shared cultural identity on the protest with Karl Mannheim's (1936) notion of 'thought style'[32] (*Denkstil*) – which is a way of thinking that is rooted in the political and cultural expression of a specific social group, and which is thus more mobile and dynamic than ideology (Mannheim 1993, cited by Budraitskis 2014) – appears as a particularly heuristic link. Mannheim's 'thought style' helps here to approach the nexus between the peculiar historical socio-economic position of the group of the intelligentsia and its political and cultural activities in shaping the public interpretation of reality. It is their mobile and unstable social position as a socially uprooted stratum "whose class relationship and social position do not succumb to easy definition, and which seeks the purpose of its ambitions amongst other strata that occupy a more certain position in the social order" (Mannheim 1993, cited by Budraitskis 2014: 2), which potentially allows them the role of a class 'substitute', capable of creating its idea in a class' stead, and for its members (ibid.). Yet, as Budraitskis observes in Moscow's protests of 2011–12:

the commonality of *style* . . . clashed directly with the ability of participants to realise their social position (or their distinction in this position), necessary for the broadening and success of the protests . . . on the path towards the birth of a new organic intelligentsia, one capable of splitting the old hegemonic constructions apart, there stood the intelligentsia of *style*, which simply reproduced and strengthened elements of this hegemony. . . . *The circle of "decent people" brings fulfilment to its participants right up to the moment when others enter into it, destroying the unity of style.*

(emphasis added)

The inability of the Bulgarian intelligentsia to lead the way of a mass counter-hegemonic movement, their preoccupation with cultural homogeneity and violent exclusion of difference both during February and in the Summer of 2013 can certainly be seen in such terms: that is, we can relate them to a specific *intelligentsia thought style*. In many ways, such a *thought style* of the intellectuals who ordered the symbolic space of the 2013 protests resembled that of the Bulgarian intelligentsia of the nineteenth century in their quest to impose a very particular and non-negotiable idea of the common good – one modelled after the Western European idea of the common good. The collective imaginary ('horizon') prescribed by the intelligentsia tended to be projected in the future as much as it was spatially projected to the West both after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, as well as after the collapse of the communist regime towards the end of the twentieth century. It was/is a very peculiar 'catch-up' ideologico-utopian construction – often narrated as a *'return to Europe'* – which overlaps to some degree with Edward Said's notion of Orientalism: only, rather than a relationship of radical alterity (such as that between Europeans and Africans in Said's account, for example), the Eastern Europeans'/the Balkans'/the Bulgarians' relationship to Europe was one of insufficient cultural development, of not-yet-there, envisioning a journey to get there, and to 'catch-up', unfolding as a form of self-colonisation (Kiossev 2011).[33]

After 1989, at the centre of this recurring ideologico-utopian construction lay the concept of the middle class imagined as a harbinger of prosperity, becoming for the intellectuals of postcommunism a sort of Holy Grail of the liberal transition; and in the summer of 2013, that Holy Grail seemed, to them, finally discovered. Such a middle class imaginary was then mobilised as a form of governmentality, through (and against) which judgements about class-others are produced in the public sphere. As we saw in Chapter Five, alongside this *intellectualist utopia* of a European (middle class) civil society, however, coexisted a bottom-up *popular utopia of 'the people'* as the authentic carrier of the 'civil society' appellation. The latter imaginary was conceived by subaltern classes in romantic-nationalist terms – as a moral entity whose memory of collective subjugation during Ottoman times is re-experienced as a sense of subjugation and humiliation in the post-1989 present, and whose collective memory of heroism during its liberation struggle in the nineteenth century functions to fuel a revolutionary will for restorative justice in the present. This utopian impulse was most visible during the Winter

mobilisations. The reason why these two utopian imaginaries are key to under-standing the class struggle which reached a particular highpoint in the 2013 protests, is that they reflect class-specific experiences – those of the 'intelligentsia' and its middle classes on the one hand, and those of the subalterns on the other – and can be seen as clear manifestations of a pervasive social and ideological conflict. In the next section, as well as in the next chapter, I highlight these ideological and utopian elements of the two imaginaries, revealed in the rift between Bulgaria's Winter and Summer 2013, but also in other protest mobilisations in CEE, and I draw conclusions about how these can help us understand the dynamics of the post-socialist political and social order in the region, and how such an approach, focused on the interlace between ideology and utopia, can be fruitfully applied to other contexts where turbulent social changes and ensuing symbolic class re-negotiation take place.

Notes

1 'DANS' here comes from the abbreviation in Bulgarian for the name of the National Security State Agency [Darzhavna Agentsia po Nactionalna Sigurnost]. It is the appoint-ment of its Head – Delyan Peevski – that triggered the protest. Note also that the entire name is originally in English, pointing to the professed Western orientation (to the English-speaking world) of protesters.

2 From a personal interview, taken on 13th June 2014. Toni Nikolov is a well-known Bulgarian public intellectual (philosopher and journalist).

3 Ibid.

4 Along with popular 'expert' (NGO-) civil society activists.

5 Protesters in February often referred to Iceland as an example of how economic and political elites can be imprisoned and how ordinary people can take charge of the politi-cal and economic decision-making.

6 The word 'agitka' means 'propaganda group' but is generally used to refer to football fan groups.

7 'Ataka' is the largest nationalist political party. It was Ataka's leader, Volen Siderov's vote that secured the government coalition of BSP and MRF. This prompted many of its supporters to blame Siderov for having betrayed their principles (since MRF is the informal representative of the Turkish minority).

8 The text in bold appears as in the original text.

9 Even when their discourses overlapped (such as in their common drawing on liberal ideas about equality before the law, transparency, and anti-monopoly, etc.), the speech of the Winter protester is not placed on an equal par with that of the Summer protester. If the February protester was not even given a chance to 'prove' they are in possession of *logos*, and not just shouting (Rancière 2004), then the *DANSwithme* protester did not have to 'prove' anything – what they were saying was legitimate to a significant extent in virtue of their biography/class position.

10 See line 15 of Gospodinov's text on the Winter protests in Chapter Six.

11 This exclusion was very pronounced. For example, a book featuring the most important texts of the protests was published under the title *The Protest* (Smilov and Vaisova 2014) and contained only texts relating to the Summer, and not the Winter protest; I attended the book launch event where the discussion very conspicuously excluded the latter. A further example comes from the famous think-tank political analyst Evgenii Dainov who specifically referred to the Summer protest as "the protest with capital P" in an article under the same title.

12 What is interesting here is that DANSwithme protesters and the intellectuals supporting the protest consistently acknowledged the presence of supporters of particular centre-right and conservative parties, such as 'Demokrats for Strong Bulgaria' and the Greens (who in Bulgaria seem to profess more right-wing rather than left-wing political views). That is, the presence of protesters supporting political parties (in Gospodinov's words 'professional revolutionaries') was not entirely delegitimised, unless they were left-wing or far-right.

13 Dainov was insisting on me highlighting these points in my research dissertation.

14 The author is referring to the pro-governmental (counter) protests here.

15 He refers here to frames which see them as middle class, so this fragment might as well be translated as "please don't middle-ize them"

16 Note further, that these are also categorical assertions (the only two modalisations include *usually* in line 5 and *can* in line 19). (There is also a reoccurring tendency to pronominalise the protest as 'they', unlike the protest in February which was consistently pronominalised as 'it', reinforcing the frame of stronger individualisation of the Summer protest, consistent with their liberal outlook).

17 Lines 28/29 of 'The question is not who will pay the bills, but who will pay for a wasted life' in Chapter Five.

18 Gospodinov's analysis in February yielded very similar conclusions: "[b]ehind [the economic crises] are other, equally severe crises. Lengthy economic crises turn into existential [crises]. And when this happens, people go out [on the streets] and say 'I don't' know what to do with this state, nor with my own life'. There is a concoction of personal dissatisfaction boiling here, a deficit of meaning, a lack of a horizon, despair from the state . . . The big recession is there economically, but it exists also in our own failed lives, and for these our own resistance is very important" (for more, see Chapter Five).

19 Moylan sees this sort of utopianism as "indicative of the rationalistic desire to contain the world within a homogenous conceptual whole, to impose order and system-ness upon a messy and recalcitrant reality and to thereby exclude difference and diversity" (Moylan, cited by Gardiner 1992: 24).

20 The idiom 'circle zero' in Bulgarian means entirely incompetent, inept, untalented (at something).

21 Line 9 of Yanakiev text earlier in this chapter.

22 Line 1 of Dainov's text earlier in this chapter.

23 Line 11 of Yanakiev's text earlier in this chapter.

24 See also Krastev (2011).

25 In addition to widespread anti-communist rhetoric in the texts of the protest in the media, the protesting crowds often shouted 'red scum' and revived other anti-communist cries and slogans from the 1989–1990 anti-communist demonstrations.

26 From the first part of the open letter cited above, line 3.

27 1000 is the postcode of central Sofia

28 A prominent political scientist, Venelin Ganev (2014: 37) further notes, "If there is one overarching lesson from Bulgaria's recent experiences, it is that civic involvement – holding officials accountable outside the voting booth – has the greatest potential for reversing declining democratic quality".

29 Recall my discussion (in Chapter Four) of the meeting with the President in February when protesters refused to negotiate along with NGOs.

30 From Nikolai Staikov's text in previous section, line 7.

31 The French and the German ambassadors openly supported the protests by meeting with them and writing an open letter calling on the government coalition to hear the protesters and resign. The Netherlands' ambassador also expressed his support.

32 Karl Mannheim (1936) uses 'thought style' to refer to the peculiar ordering of arguments that belongs to a particular group, which seeks to shape the public's perception of reality.

33 Of course, inherent to the latter is a mechanism of culturalisation, or imposing cultural differences and cultural hierarchies, a process which has been referred to as a form of self-colonisation, which replaces the very problematic mechanisms of dependency, subordination, global hierarchies, and so on as cultural differences. Some critical Bulgarian intellectuals have also referred to these phenomena as indicative of self-colonizing cultures (e.g. Alexander Kiossev 2011).

References

Barthes, R. (1993). *Mythologies*. Trans. Lavers. A. London: Vintage.

Bloch, E. (1965). Man and citizen according to Marx. In Fromm, E., ed. *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium*. New York: Doubleday and Co., pp. 200–206.

Bloch, E. (1986). *The Principle of Hope*. Trans. Plaice, N., Plaice, S. and Knight, P. Vol. 1. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Budraitskis, I. (2014). Intelligentsia as a Style: Social Protest, Organic Intellectuals and the Post-Soviet Condition. *LeftEast* [Online], 3 December.

Dnevnik (2013). *Photo-Gallery: In the Centre of Sofia: The Normal People vs. the Mafia* [Online].

Donald, J. and Hall, S., eds. (1986). *Politics and Ideology*. Milton Keynes and Philadelphia: Open University Press.

Dowling, E. and Harvie, D. (2014). Harnessing the social: state crises and (big) society, *Sociology*, 48 (5), 869–886.

Dureva, V. (2013). The revolt of the sated: Post code Sofia 1000 [Buntut na sitite: poshtenski kod Sofia 1000]. *Duma* [Online], 24 June.

Eyal, G., Szelenyi, I. and Townsley, E. (2000). *Making Capitalism without Capitalists: The New Ruling Elites in Eastern Europe*. 2nd edn. London: Verso Books.

Ferguson, A. (1995) [1767]. *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.

Foucault, M. (1971). Orders of discourse. *Social Science Information*, 10(2), 7–30.

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*. Trans. Gordon, C. Brighton: Harvester Press.

Fuchs, C. (2010). Labor in Informational Capitalism and on the Internet. *The Information Society*, 26(3), 179–196.

Ganev, V. (2014). Bulgaria's Year of Civic Anger. *Journal of Democracy*, 25(1), 33–45.

Gardiner, M. (1992). Bakhtin's carnival: Utopia as critique. *Utopian Studies*, 3(2), 21–49.

Genov, A. (2013a). *My contribution to the commentaries to the protests [Moite 'Peese Stinki' kum Komentarite za Protestite]*. blog [Online], 26 February 2013.

Genov, A. (2013b). Facebook post [Online]. Available from: www.facebook.com/asengenov?fref=ts [Accessed 5 June 2015].

Genov, A. (2013c). *Minutes of a Public Discussion Grazhdanite sreshtu oligarhiyata [The Citizens against the Oligarchy]* [Online]. Sofia: Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, 28 June.

Genov, A. (2013d). Open letter: The monuments, the recycled symbols, the art and the conversation about the past and the displacement of history [Otvoreno pismo – pametnitsite, vtorichnite simvoli, izkustvoto i razgovora za minaloto i podmiyanvata na istoriyata]. 31 December 2013. Asen Genov 2.0. blog [Online].

Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of Talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gospodinov, G. (2013). The protesting human in beautiful [Protestirashtiyat chovek e krasiv]. *Dnevnik* [Online], 18 June.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Trans. Hoare, Q. and Smith, G. N., eds. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Holquist, M. (1990). *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World*. London: Routledge.

Kelsh, D. and Hill, D. (2006).The Culturalization of Class and the Occluding of Class Consciousness: The Knowledge Industry in/of Education, *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies* [Online], 4 (1).

Kiossev, A. (2011). The self-colonizing metaphor. *Atlas of Transformation* [Online].

Krastev, I. (2011). Democracy and dissatisfaction. *Journal of Globalization Studies*, 2(1), 22–31.

Lavergne, D. (2010). *The Experts of the Transition: Bulgarian Think Tanks and the Global Networks of Influence [Ekspertite na prehoda: Bulgarskite think-tanks i globalnite mreji za vliyanie]*. Sofia: Iztok-Zapad.Macpherson, C. B. (1977). *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mannheim, K. (1936). *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & co.

Mannheim, K. (1993). *From Karl Mannheim*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers.

Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1974). *The German Ideology*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Nikolov, T. (2014a). *A Fractured Bulgaria [Propukanata Bulgariya]*. Sofia: Hermes.

Nikolov, T. (2014b). The two Bulgarias [Dvete Bulgarii]. *Kultura* [Online], 2 January.

Nikolova, M. (2014). The Bulgarian 'creative class' and the reproduction of neoliberal ideology. *CriticAtac* [Online], 16 May 2014.

Petkanov, S. (2013). *Protest* [Online], 2, 12 August.

Poulantzas, N. (1979). The New Petty Bourgeoisie. *Critical Sociology*, 9, 56–60.

Rancière, J. (1999). *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Trans. Rose, J. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Rancière, J. (2004). *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Trans. Rockhill, G. London: Continuum.

Rehmann, J. (1999). 'Abolition' of civil society? Remarks on a widespread misunderstanding in the interpretation of civil society. *Socialism and Democracy*, 13(2), 1–18.

Sayer, A. (2006). Language and significance – or the importance of import: Implications for critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Language and Politics*, 5(3), 449–471.

Skeggs, B. (2005). The making of class and gender through visualizing moral subject formation. *Sociology*, 39(5), 965–982.

Smilov, D. and Vaisova, L., eds. (2014). *The Protest [Protestut]*. Sofia: Iztok-Zapad.

Staikov, N. (2013a). The protest of the knowledgeable, the capable, and the working [Protest na znaeshtite, mozheshtite i raboteshtite]. *Dnevnik* [Online], 17 June.

Staikov, N. (2013b). WHO can be looked for in many ways [KOI mozhe da se tursi po mnogo nachini]. *Banitza* [Online], 15 June.

Teofilov, I. (2013). *Protest* [Online], 2, 12 August 2013, 7.

Tsoneva, J. (2014). Communism is wrong. *Crisis and Critique*, 1(1), 238–262.

Tsoneva, J., Stoyanova, V. and Medarov, G. (2014). The New Political Antagonisms in Post-Protest Wave Bulgaria. [Unpublished article] Cambridge, UK.

Wayne, M. (2003). Marxism and Media Studies: Key Concepts and Contemporary Trends. London: Pluto.

Yanakiev, K. (2013). Why do we protest? [Zashto protestirame?]. *Kultura* [Online], 18 September.Zarycki, T. (2015). Class analysis in conditions of a dual-stratification order. *East European Politics and Societies and Cultures*, 29(3), 711–718.

7 Hegemonic class struggles over the liberal consensus in the post-socialist context

The last two chapters offered a critical account of the two Bulgarian protest waves of 2013 in a broader attempt to first enrich our understanding of the class antagonisms which appear to have shattered the 'end-of-history' liberal consensus inaugurated in 1989, by focusing on their discursive aspects; and second to offer a critical intervention into the dominant political and academic 'expert' discourse in/ of the post-socialist region, challenging the firmly ingrained focuses, questions and conceptual apparatuses borne out of the post-1989 liberal hegemony. In this sense, the case study offered in Chapters Five and Six proposed a focus on counter-hegemonic struggle against the post-socialist liberal consensus in the field of politics, and simultaneously attempted a counter-hegemonic intervention in the established liberal consensus within the academic field.[1] In the following pages, I first go through a summary of the ways in which we can see the Bulgarian Winter protest of subaltern classes, who previously had limited (to virtually no) political voice, as a counter-hegemonic intervention or an attempt at an 'anti-passive revolution', and the Summer protest of the middle classes and the intellectuals as a response to the former, and as an attempt to re-assert their narratives of the past, evaluations of the present, and visions for the future as the dominant ones. Then, I will outline some crossovers between the Bulgarian hegemonic struggles in 2013 and the Romanian recurring popular struggles of the past five years (especially those in 2012 on one hand, and those of 2015 and 2017 on the other), as well as some lines of convergence and divergence with the Hungarian political turbulence of recent years and with the Macedonian anti-governmental protest dynamics of 2015.

Class struggles over the liberal consensus in Bulgaria

The analysis of the Bulgarian protests showed that the two waves of popular mobilisation in 2013 eventually transpired as a rift between two wide coalitions of political dissent, each of which formed 'chains of equivalence'. It is possible to speak of 'two camps' only because contending groups tended to engage in a friend and foe dynamic as part of the political process of identification and differentiation, resulting in a dichotomisation of the political arena. In reality, of course, there was a much more heterogeneous mix of struggles and groups who engage in these. Yet, this rift between two wide coalitions of struggle did not arise out of nowhere, and

it was not a product only and entirely of the discourse of powerful groups who had the power to shape (through language) the public's interpretations of what was going on. Instead, the protests' discourses reflected significant material inequalities, which can be crudely traced along the lines of division between a precariat class of unemployed and low-skilled working classes, often (but not necessarily) living outside of the capital, on the one hand, and the 'new petit bourgeoisie' and 'knowledge workers' predominantly living in the capital. What is more, these discourses had very real effects in their consequences: they effectively 'truncated' the two protest groups (by pushing certain groups out of the street demonstrations), so that the people and discourses that eventually clashed did reflect extra-discursive material (class) conditions and class antagonisms. Still, discourses were particularly central in the dynamics of the struggles for social change – it is through language that distortive frames were imposed and through language that different groups articulated distinct and conflicting visions for an alternative future based to an extent on varying interpretations of the past and on divergent evaluations of their present. This is why the discursive practices of these various groups constituted the main point of focus in this book, and it is also why any attempt to understand hegemonic relations and counter-hegemonic struggles in the region need to have a significant focus on discourse.

It is then Antonio Gramsci's theoretical account of civil society as essentially the arena of class struggle that provided this book's approach with the *theoretical* tools to account for class relations in studying protesters' discourses. The case study offered in Chapters Five and Six showed that the class antagonisms which transpired in Bulgaria in 2013 were played out *in* the arena of civil society (where, following Gramsci, reproduction of class domination or struggles of contending classes occurs), and at the same time was discursively articulated as a struggle *over* 'civil society'. The 'object' of contention which forged the specific divisions in Bulgaria in discursive terms was the right to (claim to) represent civil society and hence (the right) to impose a particular vision for a new (better) social order. Protesters in February saw liberal intellectuals and NGO activists, or the key figures of the transitional (liberal) civil society, as an organic part of the 'enemy', and in this way articulated an 'authentic civil society' subjectivity; in the summer, liberal intellectuals and NGO experts on their part sought to re-stake a claim to 'authentic civil society'. Thus, the dynamic of the two protests' relationship shows that the protest mobilizations of 2013 could be seen as hegemonic struggles for the symbolic re-negotiation of access to civic voice, and with this – for the material reconstitution of the (class) power configuration within civil society. The first wave attempted an 'anti-passive revolution' against the post-1989 liberal consensus, by articulating an egalitarian (albeit at the same time often ethnocentric) 'people's civil society', whereas the latter produced an exclusionary front of a 'middle classes' civil society' as pertaining to (produ)active, 'quality' subjects, in this way re-asserting the hegemonic position of the post-1989 liberal consensus. The discursive and non-discursive practices after the summer of 2013 then yielded a newly (re)-arranged *historic bloc* (Gramsci 1971: 137) which can (in very crude terms) be seen as involving the following configuration of power: 1) a middle class (new petit bourgeoisie) which desired to continue what the (neo)

liberal transition promised, and dispose of the political and economic transitional elites whom they blamed for the 'ersatz' capitalism of the past two decades: they longed for 'real' (Western) capitalism and modernity; versus 2) subaltern groups of the working and unemployed precariat, who desired to dispose of (in their words, 'cancel') the liberal transition, and institute radical political and economic changes that 'counted' (Rancière 2004) them in; versus 3) ruling political and economic elites, seen by both protesting groups as corrupt opportunists, who, according to the middle class protest lacked the *cultural* (and moral) capital to rule, and according to the subaltern protest, lacked the *democratic* (and again, moral) legitimacy to rule.

Although Chapters Five and Six offered a case study account of a specific political conjuncture – that of Bulgaria, mass mobilisations in other post-socialist countries, such as in Romania, Hungary, Macedonia and elsewhere in the Balkans and the CEE region, appear to be particularly liable to a need for a similar focus on internal antagonisms within struggling groups, and on the latter's class character, similarly historicising their political anti-elite struggles in terms of their post-socialist trajectories. Even a cursory look at recent years' protests in all of these different national contexts indicate a wider field of conflicts than that of those where the adversary is the state; and it is precisely, this book argues, along historically unstable class fissures that these conflicts run.

Class struggles over the liberal consensus in Romania, Macedonia and Hungary

Recent political developments in Romania constitute a particularly interesting case in this direction. As mentioned already, the country has been shaken by several mass protests since 2012. The first protest wave took place in January 2012 against the introduction of new legislation for health care reform. Anti-austerity and anti-neoliberal in their essence, these protests marked the beginning of a bottom-up challenge to the post-1989 liberal-capitalist establishment. Some have argued that it also marked the beginning of a nominal switch of political sensibilities from the Right to the Left (Tichindeleanu 2017). Marked by widespread rioting and some acts of vandalism, it resembled in many ways the fury-filled popular mobilisations of the Bulgarian Winter protest. It also led to the resignation of the Romanian Prime Minister. In Tichindeleanu's words, the 2012 protests were not only the first nation-wide protests that challenged the fundamental direction of the post-socialist 'transition', but marked the emergence of a new 'historical consciousness', which can be seen as akin to the new political subjectivity I discussed in the Bulgarian context in Chapter Five. The following year – in September 2013, protests broke out again – this time against a mining project at Roşia Montana. In contrast to the 2012 protests and in stark parallel to the Bulgarian Summer protest, however, the mobilisation was marked by the emergence of the Romanian middle class, bringing about a significantly different (to the 2012 protests) symbolic power dynamic. Some critical Romanian scholars have described this protest's language and symbolism as less confrontational, more 'funny and smart', more strongly anti-communist and often ethno-nationalist (ibid.). Similarly to the 2012 protests, these

ones also succeeded in their aim – the mining project was stopped. Paradoxically, however, in October 2013 another protest flared up in Pungeşti – again opposing an environment-damaging project, whose owner this time was Chevron. The rural population of Pungeşti who stood up against Chevron, however, received no support from the urban middle class protesters at Roşia Montana. Unlike the 'bad' capitalist at Roşia Montana, Chevron's shale gas exploration project was considered legitimate and invited no middle class outrage in virtue of its Western 'professional' 'good-investor' image. Having received no wider support, the rural protest in Pungeşti was violently suppressed by the state and thus failed at blocking Chevron's project. In November 2015, yet another popular mobilisation took place – this time triggered by a tragic fire at a nightclub in Bucharest. The grievances the demonstrators articulated zoomed in exclusively on corruption and 'the [corrupt] political class'. The role of private capital in the factors that led to the fire accident – cheap inflammable construction materials, failure to follow health and safety regulations, and so on – was entirely tuned out of the public outcry. The hegemonic discourses of Romania's Winter 2015 then overlapped with those of Bulgaria's Summer: anti-corruption and a call for the 'renewal of the political class', the symbiotic and sycophant relationship private capital has established with 'the political class' and state institutions, respectively, failed to get the spotlight. What is more, once again, the protest was dominated by Bucharest's middle classes.

Akin to the Bulgarian protests, the dynamic of contestation in Romania has also been played out significantly not just *in* the arena of 'civil society', but *over* the idea of civil society. Cirjan (2016) shows that the Romanian discourse on civil society during the 2015 protests was strategically employed to delimit political power – attributing legitimacy to some groups' grievances, demands and interests, and stripping legitimacy off others'. Here is how Cirjan (2016, no page) describes the discursive contours of the 2015 protests' power dynamic at a meeting between the country's President and a 'selected' group of street protesters:

> [T]he representatives [of civil society] were a rather recognizable bunch of institutions and organizations: pro-business organizations (*Freedom House, Expert Forum*), bureaucratized non-militant student unions, liberal NGOs, as well as a group of public figures recognized for their "civic involvement". In a nutshell, a cluster of neoliberal organisations and think-thanks, together with a pensive middle-class whose discourse focused on concepts such as: moral revolution, the renewal of the political class, anti-corruption fight, or, in the words of a participant, "humanism, dignity, respect, meritocracy and freedom" . . . It mattered who had the position and the capacity to translate this social unrest into valid political claims. In order to become once again the voices of freedom and "civil society", the spokespersons of capital such as Freedom House did not have to go onto the streets, did not have to pick up a placard or to shout their lungs out. In a way the Romanian state, like any capitalist state, involved an impressive selection process of the political actors whose interests counted but also of the topics which were deemed legitimate political concerns.

Here, as in the Bulgarian protests, those gutted from any symbolic and material resources to have their voice heard were "elbowed out by the representatives of capital or of bourgeois idealism" (ibid.). It is through such visible and other less visible symbolic gestures that some groups were subjugated at the level of language – their voices expunged from the things that were said, and the words and ideas that rendered them too visibly present – extinguished.

These two patterns – of hierarchisation of political voices and of zooming in on the problem of corruption – recurred even more forcefully in Romania in February 2017 when mass protests broke out in Bucharest once again – this time because the social-democrat government had attempted to make legislative changes that would have absolved government officials of corruption charges. Thus, the point of convergence which emerges in even more powerful ways in Romania than it does in Bulgaria is the significance of the discourse of 'anti-corruption' as an ideologico-utopian construction capable of distorting the progressive impulse of popular discontent. The co-optation by liberal-capitalist powers described previously has been carried out against the background of a vast institutionalised campaign against corruption in Romania. The latter was initiated in 2013 – shortly after the anti-neoliberal protests of 2012 shook the country. By 2015, the National Directorate of anti-corruption (NDA) had investigated an extraordinary number of high-ranking state officials and had made 1258 arrests (compared to 360 in 2006) – including those of a former prime minister, 5 ministers, 67 MPs, and 97 mayors and deputy mayors (Tichindeleanu 2017).

This anti-corruption affront – taking centre stage in the political arena throughout the entire post-socialist bloc – can be seen as displacing critique against capitalism: instead of the oppressive features of capitalist systems in general, the accusatory finger is pointed to the local 'ersatz', 'distorted' local forms of capitalism which, this narrative has it, have become such because of some presumed cultural and political 'backwardness' and deficiency of the region. The anti-corruption affront then calls for no systemic change – cultural change (of 'mentalities' and individual practices/habits) would suffice. In the words of Romanian critical scholars, the campaign against corruption "represented the success story of an internal civilizing mission" (Tichindeleanu 2017). We can further think of the power of the anti-corruption discourse to draw support by way of seeing it as an ideologico-utopian assemblage drawing legitimacy and prestige from the legacy of the Central European dissident rhetoric which was popularised in Bulgaria and Romania in the 1990s as part of the opposition's struggle to demonise the old regime. The dissidents' myth-like demands for morality and novelty in politics (for a new and moral type of politics) seeps abundantly through protest discourses today. The pre-1989 dream for "uncorrupted social structures, an opportunity for life in a humanly richer community" (Havel: 310) is underwritten by an anti-corruption discourse that cloaks self-colonising and mystifying 'common senses', ultimately negating its own critical potential. Anti-corruption, in this sense, emerges as a powerful tool to question the post-1989 political caste in power without ever questioning privatisation, deindustrialisation, the annihilation of public services and the extraordinary drop in living standards of the past two decades. That is, the region-wide

campaigns against corruption can be thought of as central to post-socialist liberal intellectual elites' attempts to challenge the established post-1989 economic and political elites whilst retaining the hegemonic position of the transitional narrative and, with this – of the politico-economic project of liberal capitalism.

At this point, one can easily draw the inference that the Romanian protests of 2012 – with their anti-austerity and anti-neoliberal sensibility – gave rise to a counter-hegemonic political subjectivity which challenged the liberal consensus of the 'transition', and which can in many ways be compared to the one that emerged a year later in the Bulgarian Winter protests. The subsequent large protest mobilisations of 2013, 2015 and 2017 in Romania can then in many ways be thought of as not simply part of the same popular mobilisational wave, but partly as liberal responses to the radical intervention of January 2012 – in an attempt to restore the liberal common sense's hegemonic status.

Macedonia too has experienced several large-scale mobilisations in the past few years. Mass protests took place in 2015 when the opposition's leader leaked audio tapes of government officials exposing the right-wing government's illegal phone-tapping programme (which placed 20,000 people under surveillance), and even a murder cover-up; a year later, even larger protests shook the country when the President tried to pardon some of the convicted government officials exposed via the tapes the year before. One of the interesting parallels between the Macedonian and the Bulgarian, Romanian and Hungarian protests is that they were all met with pro-government rallies (counter-protests) of the sort I discussed in Chapter Six. Not unlike the Bulgarian protesters, Macedonian, Romanian and Hungarian protesters questioned not only the political competences but the very (right to) political existence and citizenship of the groups of people who joined these counter-demonstrations. In striking parallel to the derision and contempt that Bulgarian pro-governmental protesters were subjected to in 2013, the Macedonian pro-governmental protesters were made fun of and dubbed by liberals 'the sandwich-eaters' (since the government offered sandwiches on street demonstrations) (Gjorgjioska and Vangeli 2017) – a symbolical gesture which aimed to not just render their economic independence visible, but to legitimise a call to make their political presence invisible. Similarly, Romanian intellectuals mocked 'counter-protesters' for their 'lack of teeth' (in both literal and metaphoric sense) – which was symbolically linked to a presumed brainwashing they had undergone (Mihăilescu 2017). This, Romanian intellectuals claimed, is embarrassing Romania in the eyes of Europe (ibid. in Tsoneva 2017 personal communication, 26 July). Liberals (both anti-governmental protest activists and intellectuals) in Bulgaria, Romania, Macedonia and Hungary also directed disproportionate amounts of attention and ridicule onto pro-governmental protesters' mode of transport – highlighting the fact that they were 'bussed into' the capital from rural regions presumably proved their 'inauthenticity' (see also Tsoneva 2014; 2017; Nikolova 2014). In another pattern identical to the Bulgarian protests, Romanian and Macedonian journalists competed to show photos that depicted the 'beauty' of protesters (and the presumed 'ugliness' of the counter-protests): young, well-dressed people were often pictured reading books and carrying witty slogans – in an attempt to frame the entire protest as owned by the educated middle classes who had finally

'stood up to challenge the remnants of communism'. Photos of the counter-protests on the other hand depicted downtrodden, desperate people, accused of having been cowed into the marches.

Similarly, Hungary's large-scale pro-governmental protests – dubbed by supporters 'peace marches' – were seen by Hungarian intellectuals as a sign of 'de-democratisation'. Yet, unlike the Bulgarian, Romanian and Macedonian intellectuals – who saw counter-protesters as *coerced into* joining these demonstrations (i.e. against their will, or rather, in their narrative – in place of any political will whatsoever), some Hungarian intellectuals recognised that (at least some) pro-government protesters "[. . .] were not puppets. On the contrary, they were informed citizens, and they were also active in civil society organisations (albeit typically associations related to religious and nationalistic organisations)" (Susánszky, Kopper and Toth 2016: 74). The explanations they went on to offer then blamed the 'mass mentality' of the population instead – many are happy, their narrative went, "to take their leaders' guidance, which provides them with comfortable slogans and reassurances" (ibid.); drawing on critiques of the 'mass man', they argue, these are "individuals escaping the burdens of autonomy and easily buying into mantras of the regime" (ibid.).

Finally, the discourse of the 'two Bulgaria-s' I discussed in the Bulgarian case study was central to the Romanian, Hungarian and Macedonian protests too. The 'two Romanias' thesis for example, also revolved around a cultural-political distinction – where 'one Romania' draws its symbolic power from the cultural-political capital going back to the inter-war period, whilst the 'other Romania' is derided for a presumed failure to keep up with the modernisation attempts of both the communist and postcommunist systems.[2] As Tsoneva (2017) notes, "aesthetics, knowledge and class (in both senses of the term, as in social class and as attainment of a level of refinement and quality) played a role in the constitution of the identity of the anti-government protesters" – not only in Bulgaria, but also in Romania and Macedonia. To varying degrees then, the centrality of the question of culture and 'cultured-ness' underpins the dynamics of symbolic power struggles during protests in many countries of the post-socialist space.

As I argued earlier in the book, however, such ideological distortions take place (and become possible) only as part of ideologico-utopian constructions – where ideological distortions dovetail, or function within genuine progressive utopian projections. An exercise in taking into account the particular ideologico-utopian interlace in discourses such as those described so far can provide potentially immensely revealing insights into how and why certain protesters' struggles for social change become dominant and win not only consent but arid enthusiasm despite often not corresponding to these groups' (class) interests. In the next section, I summarise the key insights gained in this book through such a focus on utopian elements as articulated to ideological constructions, whose particular entanglements, evident in the discourses of the Bulgarian (but also in the Romanian, Macedonian and Hungarian) protest mobilisations, I traced back to the complex and protean working of what Gramsci called 'the common sense'.

The people, civil society and popular struggle: past, present and future in the 'darkness of the lived moment'

As I showed in Chapter Five, the marked lack of articulations that drew on any class identity during the Bulgarian Winter protest illustrated the partial success of the liberal consensus in forging into the transitional 'common sense' a decoupling of inequalities from class so that the former can appear as products of individual choices rather than any structural (systemic) failures of liberal capitalism. Yet, the protean, multiplex and heteroglossic 'common sense' of the Winter protest (whose world-informed practical reason both Gramsci and Bloch taught us to take seriously) revealed that on a subjective level, a passive and mechanical reception of (neo)liberal canons (as if on a blank slate) never occurred. Instead, fragments of the most recently deposited (neo)liberal (transitional) philosophy docked in patchy, fragmentary and loose ways, stitching themselves to older thought forms, anxieties and dreams. Thus, although class decomposition had occurred since 1989, the critical rationality of the Bulgarian Winter protester (as well as the Romanian anti-neoliberal protester of early 2012) rarely indexed inequalities to individual choices; people's practical reason instead succeeded in critically fastening the social ills they experienced (or what Bloch called the 'badly existing' [Bloch 1986: 147]) to structural determinants – indexed to the systemic changes people consented to over the past two decades. Yet, this critical apprehension was shrouded in the ideologico-utopian harking back and forth between past memories of collective suffering re-lived as such in the present, and often thought of in conspiracy terms, thereby frequently defining the struggle in ethnically exclusionary terms. The Winter collectivity often experienced the post-1989 'transition' as an externally imposed turn of events (bringing suffering experienced as comparable to that during Ottoman Empire subjugation) which deprived them of their sense of agency, and ultimately human dignity. Collective suffering during the post-socialist transition was experienced as equally painful and degrading as the period of Ottoman rule, thus requiring equally radical acts of heroism and willpower to rebel against the oppressors and restore a sense of self-respect and self-determination, bringing about an alternative future that redeems both past and present. Moreover, the conspiracy narratives within which the will for struggle was often articulated, I proposed to see as a form of quasi-religious myth-making harbouring a radical revolutionary impulse. There appeared to be in Bulgaria in February 2013 a quasi-religious impetus which seemed to manage to mobilise and captivate people in a way that more 'realistic' narratives of designless or contingent explanatory frames did not. Following Bloch here, I saw these quasi-religious elements not simply as delusions, but also as allusions to a realisation of human desires – as a (Blochian) sense of light held against "the darkness of the lived moment". I thus offered to see such religious impetus and messianic belief emerge as a self-misunderstood revolutionary fervour, which seems to also be accompanied by an underlying opposition to the hijacking and reification of that fervour by formal/organised (and secular) politics (political parties).

The reason why I wished to highlight the subjective (world-informed) experience of people was to challenge the common practice (characteristic of orthodox ideology critique) to dismiss such articulations as 'irrational' and/or illustrating a 'false consciousness'. Instead, following Bloch, I argued we need to understand the past, present, and future as "mixed up inside a box marked 'darkness of the lived moment'" (Thompson 2013: 93). The image of the rising oppressed which emerged from these narratives greatly resembled Bloch's *upright gait* which is simultaneously the goal and the means to the goal of transformation (Geoghegan 1996). By rejecting the liberal transition's legitimacy and by calling for retribution, this newly articulated political agent of subalterneity attempted to redeem its control over decisions for the future: in Blochian terms, it attempted to 'extend' itself to an upright position and to take control over the steering wheel on the journey 'home' (*Heimat*), where the sense of genuine emancipation and the sense of human dignity could be restored. Yet, this experience of past and present struggles (against Ottomans in the past and against elites today) as homological, and its articulation in conspiracy terms, frequently produced an ethnocentric (and thus exclusionary) discourse – mostly positioned against Turks and Roma – which constituted a dangerous undercurrent of ideological distortion threatening to misguide the energy of the protest towards the reproduction of oppressive power relationships, rather than their transformation.

It is the same patchy and fragmentary working of the common sense, which mixes the ideological with the utopian, that underpinned the string of other contradictions which I described in Chapter Five, such as the at times critical and at times uncritical 'appropriations' of liberal-capitalist canons: for example, utilising the liberal idea of equality before the law to rationalise calls against Roma minorities; but also, in a much more radically critical manner – using the liberal ideas of 'transparency' and 'accountability' to justify calls for radical democracy, thus undermining the principles of representative democracy; or turning the essentially capitalist call against 'monopolies' against capitalism itself by proposing to rectify the problem through the nationalisation of energy companies. Thus, apart from liberal-nationalist couplings, some of the attempts at a re-contextualisation of liberal notions within popular-democratic articulations harbour strong utopian impulses. This was most vivid in the central struggle over the idea of civil society. The image of the popular civil society bears here simultaneously the liberal figure of the active citizen who keeps authorities accountable and the radical democratic figure of the *upright gait*, with which subaltern groups of the post-1989 precariat classes seek to sever the notion of civil society from its former elite carriers, and thus occupy strategic strongholds in the arena of civil society that would enable them to check the post-1989 middle class' claim to represent society as a whole.

With all its fragmented and internally contradicting constructions, the events of Bulgaria's Winter 2013, as well as Romania's January 2012, expose the failure of the liberal-capitalist transitional project to become truly hegemonic. Instead, the latter transpire as a form of *passive revolution* in the Gramscian sense (i.e. a top-down imposed form of political transformation after 1989 in which the dominant/ rising classes managed to de facto banish the possibility for popular classes to

participate in the process of change; see Thomas 2013). In this sense, we are able to see the rise of contentious politics in CEE since the latter half of the 2000s, and in Bulgaria and Romania in 2013 and 2012 respectively, as a an attempt at an 'anti-passive revolution' (Morton 2003, 2007), or the eventual response of the *subalterns* – those social groups which had been marginalised, and excluded from political participation in the processes of social transformation of the preceding two decades.

The coupling of the (utopian) citoyen and the (ideological) bourgeoisie

Similarly, in Bulgaria in the summer of 2013, utopian and ideological elements comingled and produced a spontaneous grammar of elitist and undemocratic thought forms and practices, which various protesting groups employed uncritically. Since the intellectuals and activists who initiated or uncritically adopted these discourses had a long-established and almost unrestricted access to the formal public sphere, however, their efforts to restore their spontaneous liberal-capitalist grammar back to a hegemonic – normative – position, was a much less uphill task. As I showed in Chapter Six, the dominant frame of interpretation which the powerful (in symbolic terms) groups of intellectuals and activists produced, painted a grossly distorted image of the social (class) order as consisting of 1) an 'enlightened' liberal middle class, also presented as the 'normal' minority, 2) an 'unenlightened' majority susceptible to communism, populism and 'materialism', which has entered a toxic alliance with the 3) 'undeserving' (non-meritocratic) pseudo-elites whose reproduction is ensured by the votes of the 'ignorant' majority. This ideological construction then presented the Summer protest as a struggle between 'rationality'/'normalcy' – weaved together to articulate an immutable and irreducible distinction between a resisting, struggling, defiant (liberal, anti-communist) 'protester-citizen' on one hand, and 'abnormality' in the figure of the 'passive', 'docile' (though in February 2013, active but 'ludicrously' so) and in any case 'senseless' 'subject/non-citizen', 'counter-protester'/'counter-citizen'. These discourses defined the problem of the current crisis as one of 'cultural deficiency', which would require a (r)evolution – not political and structural but private and subjective (in one's mind), particularly in what they saw as the false consciousness of the masses that needed to be 'enlightened' by the anti-communist 'forward-looking' liberal minority. As I showed in Chapter Four, all of these ideological displacements can be traced back to the first anti-communist mobilisations in Sofia in 1990. In this sense, the discursive repertoire of 'normality', 'spontaneity', 'authenticity' (of civil society), are essentially anti-communist – they are born out of a clash with an imagined Communist arch-enemy, against which supposedly stands an imagined modern, European ('normal') liberal 'rationality'.

In essence, then, in contrast to the emancipatory utopian impulse contained in the Winter's people's civil society, the utopian projection of the Summer's protest couched an essentially anti-emancipatory and hence repressive core in a language that contained an attractive 'cloth of gold' (Bloch 1995: 57). The Summer

discourse's power to capture hearts and minds was facilitated by the fact that its delusive elitism comingled with and preyed on an authentic desire for a fairer and ethical social condition. Many of the texts during the Summer protest carried a utopian vision of protesters' 'mission' as a highly moral one that epitomised the process of achieving the 'erect position' of the *upright gait* that Ernst Bloch and Adam Ferguson talked about. The Summer protest wave appeared to invoke a utopian vision of renewal and regeneration – a dream of creating some sort of a Fergusonian community which is polished and cultured, one that is practiced in the duty of citizens. At its core, however, the middle class' civil society utopia was inegalitarian in that it sought to advance the particularistic interests of an impov-erished middle stratum which holds no concern for the oppressive conditions of strata 'beneath', and hence is unable to advance a genuinely universalistic project (and hence become hegemonic; i.e. convincing subalterns that its interests are the interests of all). Its utopian core resided within a false (mystifying) projection of a middle class whose liberal-capitalist project for the future was presented as capable of bringing about a world in which reigned prosperity and freedom for all (rather than only for itself).

More specifically, the Summer protest's elitist and anti-emancipatory character was couched in a language that entertained a fantasy of civic unity, conceived as an act of national (cross-group, cultural) solidarity, which was however counterpolsed to a perceived inactive citizenry of (unenlightened) cultural others ('masses'). This fantasy was based on the utopian idea that there is a common political agenda, a common good which has the potential to satisfy all political actors. This fan-tasy involved imagining the political process as a rational, technocratic problem-solving operation. To paraphrase Cirjan (2016), who identifies a virtually identical aspect of Romanian protest politics, politics is imagined as an almost medical practice: identifying the ills of the social body and curing them. In such a view of the political process, both the diagnostic and curing practice is necessarily a non-democratic process; instead, it relies on the idea of a class of people who occupy a cognitive, cultural and moral high ground, and whose authority derives from 1) a capability to diagnose and fix problems from a supposedly disinterested (almost altruistic) position, but also from 2) a normative self-valorization of a perceived superior standing within the rank order described in this book. The Summer protest's utopian articulation then worked to silence and oppress, rather than empower and emancipate others. Thus, it seems the utopian impulses for a fair and just society occlude an inherently undemocratic and unsolidaristic, (hence oppressive) conception of the just society, epitomised by the imaginary of the 'middle class civil society'.

What is more, I showed that the perceived legitimacy of such a(n almost) messi-anic role of a 'middle class' has its provenance in the historical context of Bulgaria where the former became an integral part of the intelligentsia's ideologico-utopian desire to 'catch up' and 'return to Europe' – they placed a bourgeoisie class at the heart of their utopian projection of a 'civil' and prosperous future society – a projection patterned after the historical development of Western modernity and the historical task of the bourgeoisie class in it. It also draws on a common conflation

between the idea of the 'citizen' and the idea of the 'bourgeois', most strongly visible in the figure of the Bürger (for example, in Hegel's [1942] *Philosophy of Right*), and the consequent historical overlap between *civil society* and *bourgeois society*, which Gramsci is very keen on distinguishing between. The middle classes and their organic intellectuals' longing for a meritocratic society couched an essentially particularistic desire to restore what they perceived as their rightful position and historical task in Bulgaria's catch-up modernisation – a position and task which they perceive as stolen from them by the communists in 1944. In this sense, it was meritocracy rather than democracy that Bulgaria's intellectuals and middle class desired. This 'undeservingly impoverished and disempowered' middle stratum then needed to symbolically reaffirm their class position as simultaneously subaltern (i.e. oppressed by an 'unworthy new ruling elite') and dominant (i.e. in relation to the 'deserving poor'). The middle class in Bulgaria can thus be considered as simultaneously a dominant and a subaltern actor, employing an ambiguous combination of elite ambition and anti-elite critique. It is economically dependent on the new (post-1989) economic and political elites and often finds itself in a precarious position; at the same time, it pursues a dominant position vis-à-vis subaltern classes, relying on the rank logic described earlier, to secure and expand its political influence.[3] Such a hybrid identity of dominant and dominated then ensures their complicity in oppressive practices and in the maintenance and reproduction of post-1989 economic and political inequalities. Of course a key question which emerges here, and which is beyond this book's remit, is the (future) possibility for the formation of different (imagined and real) relations – that is, the potential for alliances between the middle classes and subaltern groups in the struggle for political changes. Although I wish to make no speculations or predictions, I argue that any research attempt to evaluate such potential should take these different groups' utopian projections seriously. What is more, no such attempt should ignore the power of the class of intellectuals in Bulgaria, and in CEE generally, to influence these projections.

Indeed, the key agent that carried out the symbolic (discursive) constitution described in this book, was composed of significant sections of the 'intelligentsia', who perceive their role as *organic* (in the Gramscian sense) to the middle classes, despite objectively occupying a much more contradictory position between the new politico-economic elites and the middle classes. In the violent classificatory and de-classificatory practices such symbolic constitution entailed, one key mechanism for inclusion and exclusion has emerged to be the fallacious distinction between the *spiritual* as opposed to the *material*. The separation between the spiritual and the material that seemed to underpin the intellectualist discourse reflects at its core a deeply conservative and ideologically oppressive outlook. It probably has its provenance in religion, and specifically in the view of matter and the material as the principle of evil: the godly 'spark' of spirit is trapped in this evil, material world, so to be united with God, man then must avoid contact with the material. In this sense, we can think of the intellectuals' dualistic moral grammar, which identifies and equates the ethical with the spiritual (as opposed to the material) as grounded in a thought form that stems from some of the most repressive aspects

of religion. It is then paradoxical that such conservatively grounded set of ideas would underpin liberal intellectuals' discourses to such a significant extent today. It is not difficult then to see such a dualistic moral grammar – that aims to govern people's thoughts and behaviours based on an ideological construction that severs the bodily from the spiritual – as a form of bio-political governmentality in the Foucauldian sense. When the intelligentsia is invested in protecting the life of a bourgeoisie/middle class and in promoting its dominant position in society (for its 'higher spiritual faculty'), groups identified as a threat to the latter's existence and dominant position can be attacked with impunity, for they are presented as pure bodies (or *zoe* in Agamben's [1998] Greek terms). Put crudely, in the name of the ideologico-utopian catch-up Europeanisation, whose success is taken to depend on a strong bourgeoisie/middle class, strata beneath do not matter to intellectuals: to paraphrase Foucault, make the middle class live and let subalterns die.

Conclusion

Overall then, the analysis I offered in this book suggests that the symbolic representations of the 2013 protests in Bulgaria, as well as of other mobilisations in CEE, became the semantic battlefield where inter-class relations were interpreted and contested. Distinct interpretations, espoused by classes occupying different positions in the post 1989 social power hierarchy rendered some proposed courses of political action and their utopian imaginaries valid (and rational) and others – invalid and silenced. Within these, the role of the intellectuals emerged as key.

What clearly surfaced as a key problem from the analysis provided concerns the representation of the subaltern. Many intellectuals attempted to present the middle class as a subaltern player in the current post-socialist liberal-capitalist order, eschewing any concerns for social strata beneath, whilst rhetorically attempting an insipid imitation of the universal democratic imaginary, whose appeal (to these intellectuals) today seems to be a far cry from the fervent enthusiasm it enjoyed in the early 1990s. Since the middle classes' *dominant subalterneity* does not even claim to represent *the people* (all of them), the effect is silencing and oppression of the popular classes. There seemed during the Bulgarian protests to often be no need for even the usurpation of the popular voice – the latter got utterly delegitimised in the public sphere through the instrumental use of a rank logic in thinking about social reality, to the point where the problem of representation was not even formulated in relation to the subaltern's standing.

We know from postcolonial studies (e.g. Spivak 1999) that, while the oppressed by definition cannot make their voices directly heard, it is traditionally intellectuals that take on themselves the mission to speak for the exploited. But what if, as I have shown previously, the former have openly discarded the 'mission' to speak for the oppressed and the exploited, and have instead chosen to speak for the dominant layer of the dominated? Since the dominant subaltern is already capable of demanding equality for itself and enjoys the support of the powerful intellectual classes, there has been an attempt for the true subaltern, the one at the bottom of the

social hierarchy (which in the context of the post-1989 socio-economic collapse has grown to tremendous numbers) to be silenced and suppressed.

Yet, as we saw in Bulgaria in early 2013 and in Romania in early 2012, the momentary irruption of popular energy pointed to an inchoate but hopeful onset of an 'anti-passive revolution' (Morton 2007) comprising counter-hegemonic moves to rectify power imbalances, which carried a serious utopian impulse. The hybrid discourse of the Bulgarian Winter protest acknowledged the universal significance of liberal democratic values, attempting to detach them from their particularistic elitist and capitalist roots and from the pattern of normative dependence on the West, and to endow them with different meanings – emphasising the principles of direct democracy and of equality, not just of opportunity, but of condition. In doing so, it claimed a legitimate voice in the debate about how the country's post-transitional social order should evolve.

The idea of civil society emerged as central in two important ways. First, it was the very arena in which class struggle occurred (in the same way as Gramsci saw its role in early twentieth century Western Europe). At the same time, it was through the concept of civil society that class struggle was textured in the language of all contending groups. The centre stage place it took in the texturing of the protests can be attributed to what we can call the '*mythologizing*' of the idea of civil society. This stems from the use of a utopian condition as the measure in comparison to which 'real existing civil society' cannot be considered as 'true' civil society. These utopian measure sticks differed along the present-day class fault lines and reflected 'class-committed' projects (Bauman 1976) for a better future. It is also among the same class fault lines that ideological elements ran parallel to utopian impulses. Although both of the main class and discursive communities contending in 2013 in Bulgaria worked from incoherent and contradictory 'common senses' that harboured both ideological and utopian elements, we can confidently differentiate between the Winter's and the Summer's ideologico-utopian constellations. The former retained a utopian core which projected an egalitarian vision for the restoration of social justice by the dominated and marginalised layers of society; the latter attempted to secure its dominant position vis-à-vis the dominated, and to reclaim what it perceived as its historical task in the country's catch-up modernisation: a position of cultural and economic dominance, disposing of the 'non-meritocratic' opportunist economic elites of what they saw as the 'pseudo-transition'. Both projects were captured by the same concept – that of civil society – but entailed profoundly different aspects of the idea: the former projected a utopian vision of the *citoyen*, whereas the latter projected the ideological figure of the *bourgeois*.

What this further illustrates is that any critical attempt to understand (class) struggles for social change needs to take social actors' (collective) subjective experience of past, present and future, and their praxis-oriented reason seriously – seeing, following Ernst Bloch, the realist potential of the apparently irrational, rejecting the "false intellectual superiority that seeks to criticise and repress intellectual approaches characterized by error and illusion, instead of investigating their world-informed character" (Hudson 2013: 31). What is important here is to

highlight the significance of the lived and felt experience of social actors, whose reality should not be ignored as 'non-objective' or 'irrational', but should be studied carefully for its realist potential. In Bloch's work, we find a conception of rationality which, against "those who make too much of a dualism between reason and imagination" (Hudson 2013: 31), pays heed to the ways in which thought and feelings about the future shape present behaviour, as well as present memory of the past. In this sense, Bloch's rejection of the dichotomy between the real and the utopian, and proposition that the two interweave instead, allows him (and us) to conceptualise reality not as 'being' but as 'becoming', which sits within a theory of open and complex determination to understand agency. The discursive analysis offered in this book illustrated how human agency can be understood in relation to class identity as 'becoming' rather than 'being': the discourses of both the Winter and the Summer protests in Bulgaria did not just reflect static material positions/conditions, but ideologico-utopian imaginations about who/what they desired to 'become' – in crude terms, the Winter protesters desired to acquire the collective national-popular will (which Gramsci spoke of), and the Summer protesters (and their intellectuals) longed to become the middle class that leads the 'masses' onto its imagined path of prosperity. Yet, only the former carries a radical democratic potential, whereas the latter can only lead to what Gramsci called a 'passive revolution'.

Notes

1 Of course, taking due account of the numerous ways in which the two fields overlap.
2 For a broader discussion of Romania's (as well as Poland's, Hungary's and Serbia's) cultural struggles within intellectuals circles, see Trencsényi (2014).
3 In this sense, class struggle was carried out within the cultural realm, or as Zizek (2009: 33) pointedly remarked in *First as Tragedy, then as Farce*, "the culture war is a class war in displaced mode".

References

Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bauman, Z. (1976). *Socialism: The Active Utopia*. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd.

Bloch, E. (1986). *The Principle of Hope*. Trans. Plaice, N., Plaice, S. and Knight, P. Vol. 1. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Bloch, E. (1995). *The Principle of Hope*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Cirjan, D. (2016). Did it ever happen? Social movements and the politics of spontaneous consensus in post-socialist Romania. *LeftEast* [Online], 4 January.

Geoghegan, V. (1996). *Ernst Bloch*. London and New York: Routledge.

Gjorgjioska, A. and Vangeli, A. (2017). Macedonia in crisis: Macedonia shows that without radical politics, political crisis is the new status quo. *Jacobin* [Online], 23 February.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Trans. Hoare, Q. and Smith, G. N., eds. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1942). *Hegemony, Passive Revolution and the Modern Prince*. Trans. Knox, T. M. Oxford: Clarendon.

Hudson, W. (2013). Bloch and a philosophy of the proterior. In Thompson, P. and Zizek, S., eds. *The Privatization of Hope: Ernst Bloch and the Future of Utopia*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Mihăilescu, A. (2017). Gabriel Liiceanu, despre protestele de susținere a PSD: România Gurilor știrbe. Lagărul de reeducare a fost mutat în sufragerie, în fața televizorului, victima stă pe un scaun, iar torționarul îi sucește creierii instalat pe un ecran. *Romania Libera* [Online] 27 February. Morton, A. D. (2003). Structural change and neoliberalism in Mexico: 'Passive revolution' in the global political economy. *Third World Quarterly*, 24(4), 631–653.

Morton, A. D. (2007). *Unravelling Gramsci: Hegemony and Passive Revolution in the Global Political Economy*. London: Pluto Press.

Rancière, J. (2004). *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Trans. Rockhill, G. London: Continuum.

Spivak, G. C. (1999). *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

Susánszky, P., Kopper, A. and Toth, G. (2016). Pro-government demonstrations in Hungary: Citizens' autonomy and the role of the media. *East European Politics*, 32(1), 63–80.

Thomas, P. (2013). Hegemony, passive revolution and the modern Prince. *Thesis Eleven*, 117(1), 20–39.

Thompson, P. (2013). Introduction: The privatization of hope and the crisis of negation. In Thompson, P. and Zizek, S., eds. *The Privatization of Hope: Ernst Bloch and the Future of Utopia*. London: Duke University Press, pp. 1–20.

Tichindeleanu, O. (2017). Romania's protests: From social justice to class politics. *Critic-Atac* [Online], 27 February.

Trencsényi, B. (2014). Beyond liminality? The Kulturkampf of the early 2000s in East Central Europe. *Boundary 2*, 41(1), 135–152.

Tsoneva, J. (2017). Quantity vs Quality Citizens and anti-citizens in the Bulgarian protests of 2013. *Socio.hu Social Science Review*, 5, 111–130.

Zizek, S, (2009). *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*. London: Verso.

Index

pro-governmental protest 4, 133, 178-9;
  see also counter-protest
public sphere 71, 76, 81, 85, 91, 110-11,
  115–16, 119, 121, 123-4, 134, 152, 164,
  168, 182, 185; access to 6, 124, 129

racism 86, 104, 143–5, 152
radicalisation 10, 15–6, 19, 21; *see also*
  radical politics
radical democratic 10–11, 15-7, 20, 26,
  29, 31–2, 48, 181, 187
radical politics 20
Ranciére, J. 20, 26–9, 31, 100, 110-11,
  119, 123, 142, 154, 169, 175
reforms 22–3, 57–8, 61–2, 65, 69, 76-9,
  82, 84–6, 88, 99, 107, 127, 175; pro-
  reform 11, 22, 29, 31, 60
'revolution' of 1997 79, 81, 124, 127
Romania 1–4, 29, 44–5, 47, 51, 173,
  175–83, 186–7

social movement 15–7, 29, 53, 78, 89
spontaneous grammar 38, 43–4, 54,
  125–6, 182; *see also* normative grammar
subaltern groups i, 25, 44, 53, 106, 111,
  123, 125–6, 133, 146, 158, 175, 181,
  184; protest 100, 175; dominant 185

'the people' 26–8, 66, 82, 98, 100, 106,
  110, 115, 118, 123, 128, 168

theory of the two extremes 30
think-tanks 52, 61–2, 76–7, 80, 85, 90,
  163; *see also* NGOs
Tocqueville, A. 19, 91
transition post- 100, 135, 149; *see also*
  transitology
transitology 11, 17, 19, 31; *see also*
  transition
trope attack 113, 115, 117; of awakening
  108–9; of suffering 105

upright gait 109–10, 126, 139–40, 150,
  181, 183
Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) 58–62,
  69, 75, 79, 82, 84, 90
utopia concept of 9, 53; surplus vii, 38,
  48, 51, 56, 102, 106, 112, 126, 149;
  functionality of 9, 45, 53; and ideology
  11, 48

war of manoeuvre 40
war of position 40–1, 51, 125

xenophobic 21–22, 24, 104, 106; *see also*
  illiberal

Zarycki, T. 24, 38, 51–2, 91, 123,
  142, 167
Zhelev, Z. 58–9, 63–70
Zizek, S. 9, 26, 30, 47, 187